Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Should NMC revisit its policy of allowing the termination of NMC employees without cause?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Car Bomb

A suicide car bomber struck near an Afghan hotel, killing at least eight people.

ASIA...Page 16

Avatar Couple

What first signaled to a young James Cameron he'd make movie history with Sigourney Weaver? Her heels.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 19

PSS receives $9.2M federal grant. **PAGE 3**

Fund balks at rate hike; Netcare ends contract. **PAGE 5**

Miami judge hears first US Immigration cases on Saipan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An immigration judge from Miami, Florida, presided yesterday over the first hearings of cases filed at the Saipan U.S. Immigration Court.

Immigration Judge J. Daniel Dowell conducted the historic proceedings that saw five removal cases filed against four Chinese nationals and a Filipino.

After informing the respondents of their rights, explaining the proceedings, and listening to the statements of the respondents and counsels, Dowell set the

See MIAMI JUDGE on Page 4

8 CNMI schools OK'd to accept foreign students

Others with mostly international students not on list yet

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The federal government has certified eight CNMI schools, making them eligible to petition for international students through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

Ada

The Washington, D.C.-based SVEP is within the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

CNMI Commerce Secretary Michael

See 8 CNMI on Page 4

MEN AT WORK HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Traffic is temporarily snarled near the intersection of Chalan Pale Arnold Road or Middle Road and Garapan Street as Commonwealth Utilities Corp. personnel fix a leaking water mainline yesterday afternoon. For every 10 gallons of water that CUC pumps out, only four to five gallons are being billed; the rest are deemed a "loss" due to a variety of factors, CUC said.

'China charter flights already fully booked'

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino and Century Tours separately said the first charter flights from China to arrive in the CNMI since the federal takeover of local immigration on Nov. 28 are fully booked. The flights will resume on Dec. 18.

See CHINA on Page 4

Survey: Many poker players are govt employees

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

A report compiled by students of the Northern Marianas College disclosed that poker players are mostly government employees who admit to being addicted to the game and are aware of the social ill poker gambling brings to the Commonwealth.

Result of the survey, conducted by NMC students under the Current Issues class of Sam McPhetres, were released Monday.

See POKER on Page 4

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Local

Lessons learned in Micronesia can help troops train Afghan police

Lessons learned in Micronesia can help the thousands of U.S. troops who soon will be headed to Afghanistan to train police and military forces, according to Washington State University professor Bryan Vila.

Vila, a former U.S. Marine and L.A. street cop, spent six years training police and directing the development of law enforcement in Micronesia during the tumultuous period when this former U.S. Trust Territory was making the transition to independence.

"People have asked me, 'Is there really much relevance between training police in Micronesia 30 years ago and training police today in Afghanistan and other war-torn nations?'" says Vila.

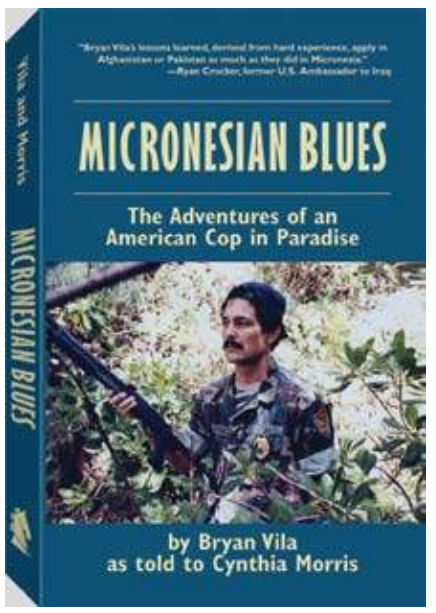
"The answer is 'Absolutely.' Even though Micronesia is very different from hot spots like Afghanistan or Iraq, the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to train police effectively in a foreign culture are universal."

Vila's new book, *Micronesian Blues* (with Cynthia Morris, Paladin Press 2009) shares this knowledge in a way that's intended to be both entertaining and informative. It chronicles his adventures and often hilarious misadventures as he discovered the dos and don'ts of cross-cultural police training on Saipan, Ponape (now Pohnpei), Palau, Truk (now Chuuk), Yap, Kosrae and Kwajalein. An instructive postscript then details the 10 most important lessons Vila learned during his time in Micronesia, and how they apply to *any* cross-cultural training mission.

ON THE NET
www.micronesianblues.com

"In recent years, the U.S. military has been working to increase cultural awareness and language training for all troops, which is a good start. But training police in a foreign culture requires a very special set of skills," says Vila.

"For example, you not only have to understand the culture and the language, you have to learn to see the world through the lens of local culture, which is difficult for many trainers. You have to actively participate in local culture. You have to learn how to connect with the right people in order to recruit the right trainees, and to develop police forces that meet the needs of the communities they'll serve. And you have to learn to be a creative problem solver and think outside the box when issues arise that you haven't dealt with before."


"Bryan Vila's lessons learned, derived from hard experience, apply in Afghanistan or Pakistan as much as they did in Micronesia."
—Ryan Crocker, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq
MICRONESIAN BLUES
The Adventures of an American Cop in Paradise
by Bryan Vila
as told to Cynthia Morris
Vila and Morris
MICRONESIAN BLUES

He adds that while it's a good sign that President Obama, Gen. Stanley McChrystal and others recognize the importance of developing competent police forces in Afghanistan, it's critical that U.S. troops assigned to police training be properly prepared for this task.

"Training police effectively in a foreign culture is an enormous challenge. It's difficult enough for highly experienced police officers, but for military personnel with no civilian police experience to do the job, well, that's a very tall order."

He explains that even though he had nine years of experience as a street cop and supervisor in Los Angeles before he went to Micronesia as a police trainer, he still had to learn a lot of lessons about cross-cultural police training the hard way, through trial and error.

"At least I had six years to learn how to do the job effectively. Today's trainers typically have a lot less time than that, so they really have to hit the ground running," says Vila.

"That's why I'm sharing my experiences in *Micronesian Blues*—including my successes and my often-embarrassing screw-ups as I struggled to be effective in a vast region with 12 different cultures and nine different languages. I hope that by passing on what I learned, I can help people today do a better job when they're tasked with training police in a very foreign culture."

Micronesian Blues has received accolades from such prominent experts as Ryan Crocker, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq; Bing West, assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration and author of *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq*; and David H. Bayley, distinguished professor of Criminal Justice at the State University of New York, Albany, and author of *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad.*

Micronesian Blues is available at www.paladinpress.com and www.amazon.com. For more information, please visit the *Micronesian Blues* website at www.micronesianblues.com. ***(PR)***

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to CMC §9910, the State Rehabilitation Council will hold its FY 2010 1st Quarter General Membership Meeting Friday December 18, 2009 Giovanni's, Hyatt 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Items
   A. Roll Call
   B. Review & adoption of Agenda
   C. Review & adoption of 5/21/09 & 9/25/09 Minutes

II. Reports
   A. OVR Director
   B. SRC Chairman

III. Old Business
   A. Policy items update

IV. New Business
   A. Election of Officers
   B. Review and approval of 2010 SRC Resource Plan

V. Consumer Forum

VI. Next Meeting and Announcements:

VII. Adjournment

/s/ SRC Chairperson

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend the meeting but require reasonable accommodations are asked to contact Magin Iginoef at 322-6537 (voice) or 322-6449 (TTY), four days in advance for necessary accomodations.

Publication of this notice is paid for by federal funds made possible by the United States Department of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

PSS receives $9.2M federal grant

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Education has approved the CNMI Public School System's application for a total of $9.2 million grant this fiscal year.

Education Commissioner Dr. Rita A. Sablan said yesterday that PSS has already received the funds, with $3 million going to the 20 public schools on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian under the innovative assistance grant program.

Of the remaining amount, $1.5 million will foot the salaries and benefits of 32 classroom teachers who are being paid under this grant, $874,000 will pay for 24 reading resource teachers and $870,532 is allocated for 41 teachers under the Troops-to Teachers program.

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

- Garapan Elementary, 829 students: $234,381
- William S. Reyes, 714 students, $201,890
- Kagman Elementary, 544 students: $153,816
- Oleai Elementary, 534 students: $150,988
- Koblerville Elementary, 431 students: $121,866
- GTC Elementary, 234 students: $76,164
- Tanapag, 210 students: $69,378
- San Vicente, 659 students: $186,332
- Dandan, 481 students: $136,002
- San Antonio, 313 students: $88,488
- Sinapalo, 229 students: $69,788
- Tinian Elementary, 279 students: $78,989
- Hopwood Jr. High, 1,134 students: $320,639
- Chacha JHS, 421 students: $119,938
- Rota JHS, 129 students: $46,480
- Tinian Jr. and HS, 294 students: $88,729
- Saipan Southern High, 836 students: $236,380
- Kagman High, 797 students: $225,352
- Rota High, 164 students: $51,410

Sablan said $1.1 million would also go to private schools for their classroom instructional materials and equipment.

Another $800,000 is being reserved for assessments, including the SAT-10 and other standards-based tests that PSS uses to measure student learning.

The remaining funds, Sablan said, would be used for school improvement projects such as the Saturday reading program; student academic competitions such as the National Forensic League, Thespians, Mock Trial, and We the People Mock Congressional Hearing; and other programs that directly benefit both public and private school students and teachers.

According to PSS federal programs officer Tim Thornburgh, this is the seventh year that PSS has directly allocated $3 million to public schools and $1.1 million to private schools.

"The schools decide on the best use of the funds based on the needs of the students and recommendations of the teachers at each of our public schools," Thornburgh said.

Of the 20 public schools in the CNMI, Saipan's Marianas High School and Garapan Elementary will get the biggest share of the $3 million due to their high student population.

Twelve elementary schools will share $1.568 million, while secondary schools are budgeted at $1.431 million.

PSS has total enrollment of 10,610 this school year.

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Dec. 19th - $100 Gas Certificate
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Dec. 21st - Catered Home Xmas Dinner for 20 Package
Dec. 22nd - PS3 Game System
Dec. 23rd - Flat Screen TV
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LIVE RESPONSIBLY

Inauguration events, 17th Legislature sessions set

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial will be sworn in at 3pm on Jan. 11 at the Saipan World Resort in Susupe, five hours after the organizational sessions of the 17th Legislature in which the governor and Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos will attend.

These are some of the new information about the inaugural activities that were released yesterday by the Legislative Bureau and Inauguration Committee co-chair Teresa Kim, who is also the interim press secretary and legal counsel for Inos.

Co-chairing the committee with Kim is Special Assistant for Administration Esther Fleming.

"I am in the process of sending invitations to the U.S. Congress, chiefs of Micronesia, Nik Pula, Tony Babauta, major business partners of the CNMI, and many more," Kim told *Saipan Tribune.*

Kicking off the inaugural activities will be an inaugural golf tournament on Jan. 9 at the LaoLao Golf Resort in Kagman. Tee time will be at 7am, to be followed by a banquet. The fee is $100 per player.

Kim said an inaugural Mass will be held on Jan. 10, Sunday, 2pm, at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Chalan Kanoa.

Glenna SP Reyes, Legislative Bureau director, said the organizational sessions for the 17th Senate and 17th House of Representatives will be held on Jan. 11, Monday, at 10am on Capital Hill.

Kim said Fitial will be attending the first sessions of the 17th Legislature.

At 3pm that day, it will be Fitial's turn to be sworn into office.

Fitial, 64, is only the second governor in CNMI history to be re-elected. He was elected in November 2005, and was sworn into office in January 2006. He is also the first governor to win the first gubernatorial runoff election in CNMI history.

Fitial is also the first—and probably the only—CNMI governor to serve a five-year term because of a newly ratified legislative initiative requiring general elections to be held only during even-numbered years. The governor that will succeed Fitial at the end of his second term will go back to serving a four-year term.

At 6:30pm on Jan. 11, a VIP Ball will be held also at the Saipan World Resort in Susupe.

At the same time, a People's Ball will be held at the Fiesta Resort & Spa in Garapan.

But the Fitial administration expects minimal costs for the transition and inauguration, and one of the ways to do this is to seek donations and work with business partners.

When Fitial was first elected into office in 2005, his then Office of the Governor-Elect received $55,000 for its operations during the transition period in accordance with the Executive Transition Act. The inauguration ceremonies at the time were also budgeted at $200,000.

The Transition Committee, chaired by Gregorio "Kachuma" Camacho, who also chairs the Covenant Party, has also started its top to bottom review of 24 Executive Branch agencies and programs ahead of Fitial's second term in office.

CHINA

From Page 1

Tom Liu, general manager of Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino, said the first charter flights from Shanghai and Guangzhou are "fully booked" while "future flights are showing a very positive booking."

Shanghai Airlines, which uses a Boeing 767 aircraft, has a seating capacity of 222.

China Southern brings in up to 195 passengers from Guangzhou using a Boeing 757 aircraft.

Because the two airlines will fly twice weekly, they bring in up to 834 passengers every week starting on Friday.

"Because of the three-week gap since federalization, the passengers are anxious to travel. Even before the suspension of flights, the flights were doing quite well," Liu told *Saipan Tribune* in a phone interview.

Nomi Ma, operations manager of Century Tours, confirmed yesterday a full booking for the first flight since federalization.

Charter flights from China have been suspended over immigration and diplomatic concerns since the federal government took over CNMI immigration on Nov. 28.

The suspension of CNMI-bound China charter flights came about when the Chinese government was not immediately informed by the U.S. State Department of the Department of Homeland Security's grant of parole to Chinese tourists entering the CNMI.

With communications between Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-GU), and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and State Secretary Hillary Clinton, the diplomatic note was sent and all the parties concerned—including the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs—have since been informed of the DHS policy to allow Chinese tourists to come into the CNMI without a U.S. visa by Nov. 28.

The Marianas Visitors Authority reported that the suspension of charter flights from China could cost the CNMI up to $2.6 million in economic activity for each week the charter services remain suspended.

"We [Tinian Dynasty] suffered losses just like anybody else," Liu said.

He thanked DHS, the State Department, Fitial and other parties involved in making sure the charter flights from China will resume.

MVA, the CNMI government's tourism agency, said that 73 percent of the seats are allocated to the Tinian Dynasty Holidays, an affiliate of Hong Kong Overseas Entertainment, doing business as Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino, while the rest is allocated to Century Tours.

The suspension of the charter flights came at a time when visitor arrivals to the CNMI are still decreasing. In October alone, arrivals plunged by 31 percent, from 29,611 last year to 20,267 during the same month this year.

POKER

From Page 1

The survey compiled data culled from over 200 respondents.

Of this number, 118 respondents say they are government employees, 72 said they work in the private sector, and 34 say they are unemployed.

When asked if they consider themselves poker addicts, 138 said yes; only 34 said no.

The results showed an almost equal split in the genders of poker arcade players, with 126 female respondents and 120 male respondents.

Majority of poker arcade players belong to the age bracket of 26 to 40, with 154 respondents; 60 players said they are between 22 and 25 years old; 24 say they are 18 to 21 years old; while only 20 respondents were above 40.

When broken down along ethnic lines, the survey data showed more Chamorro individuals who regularly play in poker arcades, with 94 respondents. This is followed by a large number of Filipinos, 82. Other nationalities only account for 22 of the remaining respondents.

Each respondent admitted to playing poker either daily, twice a week, or thrice weekly.

A large number of respondents, 180, admitted using their salary to place bets; 36 respondents say they get it from loans; 18 admitted stealing the money; and 16 players say they pawn or sell property.

Each time they play, 90 players say they allot $10 to $50 as capital; 62 respondents say they have a budget of $50 to $100; while 38 say they spend more than a $100 each time they play.

Most respondents are aware that poker is a form of gambling. Only 52 players believe that poker is a form of entertainment.

This self-awareness extends to their perception of poker as a social ill. Of the over 200 respondents, 194 are one in saying that poker is a serious problem in the CNMI and they are convinced that this affects their lives in many ways.

The CNMI government generates money from the poker arcades through the license fees paid to the Division of Revenue and Taxation. On Saipan, each poker machine is required to pay a $12,000 license fee; $10,000 per machine on Rota; and $10,000 for each machine on Tinian.

These fees are being assessed every year to fund the government's scholarship programs such as SHEFA and CNMI Scholarship Programs.

However, due to the accounted social and moral impact of these poker machines, lawmakers and community members are split in their opinion about the idea of abolishing the poker industry on the islands.

At present, a proposal to relocate the poker arcades to one specific location such as La Fiesta is on the table for discussion.

8 CNMI

From Page 1

J. Ada announced yesterday the eight schools that have been both SEVP- and CNMI Department of Commerce-certified.

They are the Agape Christian School in Gualo Rai, Calvary Christian Academy in Chalan Kiya, Eucon International School in Gualo Rai, Grace Christian Academy on Navy Hill, Mount Carmel School in Chalan Kanoa, Northern Marianas College in As Terlaje, Saipan Community School in Susupe, and Saipan International School in As Lito.

"We congratulate the schools that have been certified by the SEVP. The educational institutions should now move forward and comply with the necessary requirements under the federal regulations. In terms of providing assistance to the schools, we have pretty much assisted with all we could," Ada said in a statement.

International students who enter the CNMI after the implementation of the Immigration and Nationality Act must have a properly issued U.S. "F" or "M" visa, Ada said, quoting SEVP Branch Chief for School Certification Dianne Currie.

Other private schools with mostly international students have yet to be certified by the federal government, including Ladera International School of Saipan, International Business and Professional College, Emmanuel College, and the University of Loyola at CNMI. These schools have students mostly from the Philippines, China and South Korea.

Lee Francia, chief finance officer of the University of Loyola at CNMI, said yesterday that their school is in the process of applying for SEVP certification. The school offers a nursing course, among other things.

Ada, in a phone interview, said, "At this time, there's nothing that CNMI Commerce could do for the schools because the certification rests with the federal government."

He said other CNMI Commerce-certified schools that are not SEVP-certified as of today may still be undergoing certification processing through the SEVP, including petition, document submission, and request for evidence.

"We urge these schools to comply as soon as possible since a timetable of no more than 90 days will be accorded all outstanding applications," Ada said.

Petition

The eight SEVP-certified schools are now eligible to petition for international students through the SEVP.

Under the SEVP, all nonimmigrant students wishing to attend schools in the CNMI are required to do the following:

a) Obtain a Form I-20 from their respective schools;

b) Upon applying for visa, an interview should be conducted at an American Embassy in their respective country or online at the embassy or consulate's Web site;

c) Pay a fee of $200 for the student I-901 fee; and

d) Students must possess a valid passport with expiration of at least six months after the date of entry into the CNMI or the U.S.

SEVP visit

In November, five SEVP staff visited the CNMI to conduct an overall orientation, providing Designated School Official training, and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System training.

They also had the opportunity to visit all Commerce-certified schools and assisted those needing help in completing the I-17 petition online. Fortunately, some schools were adjudicated just as the group returned to Washington, D. C.

"The reason that we worked with you onsite [in the CNMI] was to ensure that those CNMI schools with international students would be in the position of being able to issue the necessary Forms I-20 to those international students who would be returning to the CNMI after the winter break or to those international students who would be first entering the CNMI for the spring 2009 session that begins in January," said SEVP's Currie in a statement.

MIAMI JUDGE

From Page 1

next hearings of the five cases for Jan. 27, 2010, at 9am.

Dowell reminded the respondents to appear at the Jan. 27 hearings, with or without counsel.

Dowell completed separate hearings of the five cases after nearly two hours. He started a few minutes past 9am and was done with the last case by 10:55am.

Clarence Wagner, chief counsel for the U.S. DHS Honolulu, Hawaii Immigration and Customs Enforcement, appeared with Michael A. Samaniego, assistant field office director for the U.S. DHS Detention & Removal Operations. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kirk Schuler sat beside Wagner.

Catherine Grover, Immigration Court legal technician from Salt Lake City, Utah, assisted Dowell in the proceedings.

The first case involved Mei Wen Wu, a Chinese woman who appeared with counsel Stephen Woodruff. A Fujian interpreter in Atlanta interpreted questions and responses via telephone. Dowell granted Woodruff's request to continue the hearing so they could prepare.

The second case involved Zhoumin Wang, a Chinese male, who was also with Woodruff. Woodruff also asked for continuance to give them more time to prepare for the hearing.

The judge then heard the cases of Jiang Guo, a Chinese male; Minglong Li, a Chinese male who speaks Korean; and Danilo Rejano, a Filipino male. The three appeared in court without lawyers.

A Mandarin interpreter in Honolulu appeared telephonically for Guo. A Korean interpreter in Hawaii spoke telephonically for Li. A Tagalog interpreter in Seattle spoke telephonically for Rejano.

In an interview after the hearings, Wagner said the proceedings went well as the judge thoroughly explained the respondents' rights.

Wagner said he did not object to the continuance of the hearings in order to make the proceedings as reasonable as possible. He said he wants people in the CNMI to develop a familiarity with U.S. Immigration proceedings.

Woodruff said the hearing was very efficient. "The immigration judge was very professional. He wants to be careful to do things right, given that this is a new thing. This is a transitional thing and there's some unique aspects to the law," he said.

Woodruff said the interpreters that appeared telephonically appeared to be excellent.

Assistant Chief Immigration Judge Thomas Y. K. Fong earlier disclosed that, although there is no permanent judge assigned to the Saipan Immigration Court, they have judges on call for duty that will hear cases immediately, if necessary.

Fund balks at rate hike; Netcare ends contract

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A health and life insurance company terminated its contract with the NMI Retirement Fund after it failed to settle a contract dispute with the agency.

Netcare Health and Insurance ended its service on Dec. 15, seven months ahead of the expiration of its agreement with the Fund.

Fund Administrator Mark A. Aguon told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday the company had wanted to raise its insurance rate to more than double the existing rate, which the agency opposed.

Under the company's two-year contract, it is paid $8 per pay period for members making $20,000 a year. Netcare wanted to increase the figure to $16 and up to $20.

The two-year contract was signed in July 2008.

Aguon described the reason for termination as a "contract dispute."

"They wanted to raise the rate and we said no. We disputed the contract and we disagreed with the proposal. They decided to terminate it," Aguon explained.

"[But] I foresee placing another carrier very shortly. This is just something that happens once in a while; people disagree [on issues]," he added.

Aguon informed all department heads of the termination of Netcare's contract and assured that a new company will come in to serve government employees and retirees.

The Fund will issue an emergency request for proposal to address the situation. It will entertain proposals until Dec. 31.

"Be assured that we are currently in the process of issuing an emergency RFP for a new life insurance carrier and anticipate placing coverage with another company within the next several weeks," Aguon told department heads yesterday.

In the absence of a new carrier, all claims inquiry are directed to the Group Health Life Insurance Program.

He said the Retirement Fund/GHLI will continue to require payroll supervisors and all individuals responsible for setting up computerized premium deductions in all autonomous and non-autonomous agencies to forward all required payments to the GHLI to avoid any employee or retiree from losing life insurance coverage during the transition period.

GHLI Trust Fund entered into an agreement with Netcare on July 1, 2008, to provide group life insurance for CNMI government employees, dependents of employees, and retirees. The terms of the policy was for a period of three years starting July 1, 2008.

Man gets 9 days in prison for attacking brother

A man who was recently arrested for allegedly assaulting and threatening to kill his brother with a knife at a Bangladeshi church in Garapan entered a guilty plea yesterday.

In a plea agreement with the government, Alam Gir Mollah, 34, pleaded guilty to assault and battery.

Superior Court Associate Judge Perry Inos accepted the agreement and Mollah's guilty plea and dismissed the remaining charge of assault with a dangerous weapon.

Inos sentenced Mollah to one year in prison, all suspended except for the nine days he had already served in jail.

The judge placed Mollah on probation and ordered him to pay a $100 court assessment fee, and a $25 fine plus a probation fee. Inos also required him to perform 30 hours of community service.

Assistant public defender Richard Miller served as counsel for Mollah. Assistant attorney general Brian Gallagher appeared for the government.

According to the plea agreement, the defendant assaulted Hiron Mollah at the Bangladeshi church in Garapan on Dec. 6, 2009.

The victim claimed that Mollah slapped him in the face and pointed a knife at him.

He also told police that Mollah had been treated at the Commonwealth Health Center in 2004 for mental health problem. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Ex-convict pleads guilty to assaulting an ex-girlfriend

The Superior Court imposed yesterday a six-day prison term on an ex-convict who broke into the apartment of his former girlfriend and assaulted her.

Associate Judge Perry B. Inos sentenced Phillipe Julian Defang to one year in prison, all suspended except for the six days he had already served in jail.

Inos placed the 30-year-old Defang on probation and ordered him to pay a $100 fine, $25 court assessment fee plus probation fee. The judge also ordered Defang to perform 30 hours of community service.

Defang and counsel, assistant public defender Richard Miller, signed a plea agreement with the government, represented by assistant attorney general Brian Gallagher.

Defang pleaded guilty to assault and battery. He also admitted to violating the conditions of his probation in a previous case.

According to the plea agreement, Defang assaulted the victim on Dec. 5, 2009.

In his report, detective Norman Rasiang said the Department of Public Safety received a call about a disturbance at an apartment in Finasisu on Dec. 5.

Rasiang said the victim alleged that at 11:50pm Defang came to her apartment but she refused open the door. Defang left, but came back after 10 minutes and started knocking on the door.

The victim told Defang to leave because her boyfriend was coming. The defendant broke the door's lock, allowing him to enter the apartment. He came in and allegedly pushed the victim.

In August, a Superior Court judge imposed a 15-day prison term on Defang who was accused of damaging three vehicles parked in front of a warehouse in Gualo Rai. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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DUE TO ARTICLE 12, INCOME, AND WORKING STATUS:

NMI rental housing market remains distressed

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
Moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Article 12 of the CNMI Constitution and other factors such as income and working status continue to affect the overall performance of the islands' rental housing market, which remains in distress, according to the islands' housing agency.

In its latest consolidated annual performance and evaluation report to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. disclosed that the overall rental housing market in the CNMI remains 50 percent greater than the owner-occupied housing market.

The medium home value in the CNMI has also remained stagnant at $16,000 since the 2000 Census, the NMHC report states. The number and distribution of homes valued at $10,000 or less and those valued at up to $500,000 or more has remained constant since 2000.

The relative value of any home or property is based on some criteria such size, condition, location, improved versus unimproved, materials used in the construction of the home, access to utilities, water and sewer, and road conditions.

In the CNMI, the total housing stock is estimated at more than 20,000 units, the report states, and it is estimated that two-thirds of these units have two rooms or less.

The housing agency said the average number of individuals in rent-occupied units is four, compared to owner-occupied units that have five.

The condition and materials used in the construction of a home also have significant impact on its relative value, according to the report.

Owing to the ongoing economic slump in the CNMI, the overall housing market in the Commonwealth remains in distress, NMHC said.

"With jobs and income decreasing…and the bleak economic conditions of the CNMI, individuals and families are reluctant to take on additional long-term financial burdens," the report added.

NMHC, through the Home Partnership Program, Rural Development and agreements with banking institutions, helps provide low interest loans for new housing construction and home renovations.

Despite this assistance, the report added, many individuals and families cannot afford to pay their monthly financial obligations and fall behind on their payments which, at times, lead to foreclosure.

Rebuenog rests case, testifies

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ramona Taisakan Rebuenog, a Northern Islands mayoral candidate who filed a lawsuit after she lost the race by a single vote, rested her case yesterday.

After attorney Richard W. Pierce, counsel for Rebuenog, informed the court they're resting their case, attorney Robert Torres, counsel for NI mayor-elect Tobias Dela Cruz Aldan, began calling in witnesses.

Torres first called Teresa Kisa of the Department of Public Lands, then Julie Villagomez of the Commonwealth Election Commission.

Torres later called Rebuenog to the witness stand. At 4:30pm, Torres was still questioning Rebuenog.

Superior Court Associate Judge David Wiseman then ordered Rebuenog to return to court today, Thursday, at 9am for the continuation of her testimony.

On Monday, Wiseman disqualified three voters and voided their votes. The disqualification of the three brings to 15 the total number of disqualified voters. Three voters were upheld.

Rebuenog filed a lawsuit to challenge 21 votes that she claimed were illegal.

Rebuenog named the Commission Election Commission and Aldan as defendants in the lawsuit.

US govt told to produce evidence in 'ice' case

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The federal court has ordered the U.S. government to produce some of the evidence in connection with the arrest of one of two men who allegedly tried to sell 947 grams of "ice" to two undercover Federal Bureau of Investigation agents.

In granting Biao Huang's pretrial motions, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex R. Munson directed the U.S. government to produce a copy of notes that include the chemist's worksheet on the alleged methamphetamine or "ice" seized on Oct. 23, 2008, May 20, 2009, and Aug. 17, 2009.

Munson ordered the prosecution to produce information on the method used to test the alleged contraband seized on those dates.

The judge also directed the U.S. government to produce a copy of sections of the Drug Enforcement Administration laboratory operations manual on the procedures and standards to be used in the testing of "ice."

He also ordered, among other things, the U.S. government to produce a copy of each draft and final transcript of each audio recording that it intends to use at trial.

Attorney G. Anthony Long is counsel for Huang. Assistant U.S. Attorney James Benedetto is prosecuting the case.

A total of 947 grams of "ice" worth $473,000 was reportedly seized from Huang and Sheng Lian during a buy-bust operation inside a room in a hotel in August this year. A total of 1,021.4 grams was seized—the biggest "ice" haul in the CNMI so far—during the entire operation that also involved other suspects.

In October, Lian pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute "ice" and possession of a controlled substance. His sentencing was set for Jan. 27, 2010.

According to the plea agreement, from Oct. 23, 2008 through Aug. 17, 2009, Lian conspired with Huang and others to distribute "ice."

The overall scope of the conspiracy involved 1 kilogram of "ice."

The other co-defendants are Chun Mei Li, and Ya Bin Huang.

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GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NOTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS BEFORE THE COMMISIONER OF INSURANCE.

JOHN HANCOCK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
Applicant

In the Matter of the Application for Withdrawal and to Permanently Discontinue the Transaction of Insurance Business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Pursuant to 20 NMIAC §20-40. 1-210

Notice is hereby given that John Hancock Life Insurance Company of 601 Congress Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02210, intends to withdraw and to permanently discontinue the transaction of insurance business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Effective December 31, 2009, John Hancock Life Insurance Company will cease to exist as a separate entity as a result of a merger with its affiliate, John Hancock Life Insurance Company (U.S.A.), which is the surviving insurer.

All persons interested in this matter should write to the Company at the above address or call 617-663-2486 or the Office of the Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, Department of Commerce at Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. 664-3000.

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LaoLao Bay resort gives MLSC $20K

Saipan LauLau Development Inc. donated $20,000 to Micronesian Legal Services Corp. on Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2009).

The firm, doing business as The LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort in Kagman, selected MLSC as a recipient for its charity because they were impressed with the work MLSC provides, "especially to those residents with critical needs such as victims of violence, the elderly, persons with disability, helping clients with housing problems and others," said Yun Kim, president and chief financial officer of Saipan LauLau Development, Inc.

MLSC has provided free legal services in civil cases to poor people in the Marianas and throughout Micronesia since 1971.

The Marianas Office Directing Attorney, Jane Mack, said the Marianas Office was very grateful for the donation. "The LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort is a beautiful place, dedicated to recreation and relaxation. It's very inspiring that they have the good will and generous nature to also reach out to the poor with a helping hand."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In the photo is Maria P. Muna, paralegal at the Marianas Office of MLSC; Jane Mack, Directing Attorney-MO-MLSC; Omar Calimbas, staff attorney at the MO –MLSC; Yun "Alex" Kim, president and CFO, Saipan LauLau Development, Inc., dba LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort; Lucy Blanco-Maratita, CNMI member of the MLSC board of directors; Mary Lou Ada, Human Resources manager, Saipan LauLau Development, Inc.; and Dimitri Varmazis, staff attorney-MO-MLSC.

The donation will help keep MLSC open and providing services. The CNMI has slashed its contributions to MLSC in its effort at fiscal restraint; however, according to Mack, the client population's need is as great or greater than ever. "There are so many people who need our services because of the economy and their own legal situations," Mack said.

Saipan LauLau Development, Inc., recognized this need and reached out to offer its help. "We understand the demand for legal services has increased and many have been turned away because of the lack of staff to help them," Yun Kim said. "We hope, through our contribution, that MLSC will continue to provide equal access to justice."

The LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort offers golfing, a restaurant, and resort accommodations overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Saipan. Information about the business is available online at www.laolaobay.com. ***(PR)***

Free Shipping Day not so free for some

DENVER, CO—Residents of Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories may not feel the Christmas spirit when they visit the Web sites of some merchants participating in Free Shipping Day on Thursday, Dec. 17.

The idea behind Free Shipping Day was to encourage shoppers to continue shopping online later into the Christmas season. But consumers need to make sure they read the small print, warned Darrell Houghton, president of Aloha Forwarding (www.alohaforwarding.com), a package forwarding service based in Denver, Colorado.

"Some merchants put restrictions on their free shipping offers," says Houghton. "Usually addresses outside the continental United States don't qualify."

So why are some merchants such Scrooges when it comes to shipping beyond the 48 contiguous States? "If a merchant ships exclusively through UPS or FedEx, they can't offer free shipping to Hawaii, Alaska and the U.S. Territories because it's too expensive," explained Houghton. "The challenge for consumers is to find merchants that also offer the option of shipping via Priority Mail."

For online shoppers that don't qualify for free shipping because of their geographic location, all is not lost. "Aloha Forwarding was born from a need I knew was out there," says Houghton, who started his package forwarding business in 2008. "If a retailer only offers delivery via UPS or FedEx, just have your package shipped to Aloha Forwarding and we'll forward your package to you via Priority Mail." You still need to pay for postage and a small handling fee, but when the alternative is UPS or FedEx, the savings can be substantial. For example, a 2-pound package shipped from the mainland to Hawaii via UPS is over $38. That same package shipped through Aloha Forwarding, including postage and handling, is only $13.25.

Houghton has expanded his service beyond Hawaii and Alaska to include Guam, Saipan, and Canada. Visit www.alohaforwarding.com for more information. ***(PRWeb)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-10-009

Construction of a New Secondary Containment at Power Plant 1, Saipan

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting sealed bids from qualified contractors or firms for the Construction of a New Secondary Containment at Power Plant 1, Saipan, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

A mandatory site visit and pre-bid meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2009 at 10:OO AM, local time at CUC Power Plant 1 Administration Building, Lower Base, Saipan, to ensure that the contractors are fully aware of the work involved and familiarize with the site conditions. All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposers due to lack of information or understanding of the plant site conditions in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or performance of work under the contract.

One (1) original and five (5) copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"IFB 10 - 009 – Construction of a New Secondary Containment at Power Plant 1, Saipan"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, Room No.4, 3rd Floor Joeten Dandan, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **Wednesday, December 30, 2009 at IOAM.,** (CST) local time, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A bid guarantee of 15 percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury. A performance and payment bond of hundred (100%) percent each of the total proposal price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. Surety companies must hold a certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety for proposal security. No advance payment will be authorized on the project or an Irrevocable Letter of Credit (100% aggregate contract cost/CUC Beneficiary) or a payment bond. All insurers questions, concerns and qualification should handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Tide 4, Division 7). A Clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

The bidder is required to submit a copy of his CNMI Business license in compliance with the Contractor's Registration and Licensing Laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, upon award of the contract. The Contractor and all subcontractors will be obligated to pay wage rates not less that the current CNMI minimum wage, prevailing through the period of contract, as indicated in the web page - http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/cnmi/cnmi.htm. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

The Scope-of-Work and Bid package will be **e-mailed**, upon request, to all interested bidders, by the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, during working days, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 PM, local time, **until December 23, 2009**. Contractors are advised that the work will be carried out as a part of CUC response actions under the consent decree noted as Stipulated Order No. 2 (SO 2).

All inquiries must be submitted in writing no later than **10:OO AM local time on Thursday, December 24,2009**, to Mr. Manuel B. Sablan, Jr., Procurement & Supply Manager via email at **msablan@cucgov.net** and Mr. Venugopal Prabhakara, Power Generation Managing Engineer via email at **venu@cucgov.net** with a copy to Ms. Becky Grimes at **beckyg@cucgov.net**.

Selection procedure shall be in full compliance with CUC Procurement Regulations. CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the interest of the government.

/s/ TIMOTHY M. CONNOR
CUC Legal Counsel

/s/ ABE UTU MALAE
Assistant Executive Director for Operation

/s/ ANTONIO S. MUNA
Executive Director

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Dec. 17, 1998

902 talks on track again

President Bill Clinton's special representative to the Section 902 consultations, Edward B. Cohen, will be arriving in the Northern Marianas on Jan. 18, 1999 to finally find solution to problems that have strained CNMI-US relations. According to Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan, CNMI's chief negotiator, Cohen has sent a letter informing him of his intention to resume the stalled bilateral talks which has been postponed twice. "We are now preparing to convene the negotiating team to meet again and discuss the areas which we need to emphasize," said Sablan. He said the CNMI panel will meet today to finalize the issues which will be covered in the meeting with Cohen.

Legislators loosen belt-tightening in hiring

Despite shrinking cash resources of the government, the House of Representatives yesterday voted to approve three additional full-time employees for the Division of Sanitation Services over fears of potential delay in public service due to lack of manpower. A joint resolution will seek the Department of Public Health to reprogram some of its funds to pay about $60,000 in total annual salary for the three new positions under the current budget allocation of the government. The resolution was passed in a special House session yesterday and now heads to the Senate for approval before it becomes effective, according to representatives.

Dec. 18, 1999

Plans to detain Taliban on Tinian thrill businessmen

Local businessmen here chorused in saying that making Tinian a holding area for arrested Taliban warriors will help revive the island's economy through increased spending activities that will come akin to the arrival of military personnel. The plan would also give Tinian and the rest of the Northern Marianas international exposure from some of the world's largest media entities that are expected to send in reporters on the island for coverage. Tinian businessmen complained that revenues reached rock bottom since after the September 11 terror attacks on the US, as they project better sales figures if plans to detain Afghan warriors on the island pushed through. In the meantime, they cut manpower and working hours to remain afloat amid the hard economic times.

Boy gets wish to take part in fire drill

Shy and soft-spoken, Saipan's youngest and first-ever honorary firefighter, Patrick S., took part in a fire-and-rescue drill held at the Governor's Office Friday morning, with brawny firemen leading the frail-looking boy through the ropes of the demonstration. Five-year-old Patrick, who has a hypoplastic right ventricle (heart) problem, was also accompanied by Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio, who took a break from his customary office routine to play host to the young boy. When later asked if he enjoyed himself, Patrick shyly nodded but he refused to answer further questions by reporters.

Dec. 18, 2002

Price gouging complaints up

Residents are complaining that some retailers on the island have jacked up the prices of basic commodities, even as food supplies remain limited after the worst typhoon ever to hit the Marianas left the island a wreck. This has prompted the Attorney General's Office yesterday to warn merchants that it would file criminal and civil cases against anyone who is caught engaged in price gouging. Commerce Secretary Fermin Atalig, who was on the island Saturday, warned that price gouging carries stiff penalties, including imprisonment and a permanent prohibition to engage in business again. Assistant Attorney General Brian Caldwell said he is now working closely with the office of Atalig, with some 15 stores on the island already served with cease and desist notices.

Heinz: $19-M loan's terms 'impractical'

House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider favors the expeditious release of overdue rebates and refunds before Christmas but not at the expense of the entire Commonwealth's future financial fate. This, as he branded as "impractical" the $19-million loan being eyed by the government to secure from the Bank of Guam, considering the kind of collateral the banking institution reportedly proposes. "People have got to slow down and look at what is the most practical. Everybody is desirous to give the people their deserved refund and rebate [this] December, but not at the expense of subjecting the entire Commonwealth.

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JOETEN's Santa's Nite Sale!

Thursday, December 17

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Infant Rompers & Sets 25% off

Timex Watches 25% off

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Electronics 25% off

Rugs & Linens 25% off

Housewares 25% off

Cooler & Water Jugs 25% off

Electric Fan 25% off

Toys & Games 25% off

Bicycles & Tricycles 25% off

Swimming Accessories 25% off

Sunglasses & Eyeglasses 25% off

Christmas Box Cards 20% off

Christmas Linens 30% off

Christmas Housewares 30% off

Christmas Decorations 35% off

Christmas Lights 40% off

Christmas Bows, Ribbons, Wrappings 25% off

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XIX, Issue No. 301

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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Curbing 'conflict minerals'

The deadliest conflict since World War II, in which 5.4 million people have died and 200,000 women have been raped, rages far from Iraq and Afghanistan. It is in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where murderous militias are battling for control of valuable minerals such as tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold, which are essential to the worldwide production of consumer electronics. Congolese, in other words, are dying in extraordinary numbers for our cell phones and video games, digital cameras and laptop computers.

Most consumers are unaware that these gadgets often have their beginnings in Congo's torment. Not only are militia-controlled mines the cause of continuing warfare, but they are hellish places to work. Much of the mining is done by local villagers forced into labor against their will—and, in some cases, by enslaved children—with few or no safety measures or precautions taken.

The international community has imposed a series of arms embargoes and sanctions in an effort to weaken the militias; the U.N. Security Council recently extended its embargo. High-powered weapons, however, remain readily available, and violence is undiminished. It's time to turn to the businesses that profit from Congo's "conflict minerals" and to figure out a way—as was done with conflict diamonds—that they can certify which mines in Congo are operating legally and safely. A handful of companies have voluntarily begun to research and take steps to address the issue, including Hewlett-Packard Co., Intel Corp., Dell Inc. and Motorola Inc. They deserve encouragement, but individual corporate efforts are not a sufficient substitute for national policy.

Two bills pending in Congress could start the process. A House bill is aimed at the middlemen—the smelters—that receive raw minerals from Congo and neighboring countries they're routed through. Under the bill, smelters—most of which are located in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—would have to agree to be audited in order to export to the U.S. And after two years of auditing, they would have to certify whether their products contain conflict minerals. A Senate bill would require publicly traded companies to disclose the origins of the minerals they use and, if the source is Congo or a neighboring country, the name of the mine.

Both bills raise questions, such as who would do the auditing and how the certification process would work. But the fact that legislation is pending in Washington already has put pressure on mine officials in Africa, according to human-rights activists. It won't be easy, but certifying minerals as "conflict free" can be done. We did it with diamonds. We can do it with minerals, too.

(c) 2009, Los Angeles Times

Taking bold risks

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC. They can be contacted at biz_results@yahoo.com.

With all of the concerns about the economy, global events, and local changes, many business owners are hunkering down and waiting to see what happens. There are too many big question marks that haven't been answered, and to make any long-term commitments seems foolhardy to the faint of heart.

That's why the sci-fi epic movie coming out this weekend, *Avatar*, is so intriguing and stands as an inspiration to entrepreneurs who may have cold feet due to the many uncontrollable events that pound us each day. Director James Cameron is known not only for his innovations in movie technology, but also for taking bold risks. His last film, *Titanic*, was a major movie production that showcased his attention to detail and technological perfection. He used expensive scale models and pioneered computer graphics that ballooned the budget to around $260 million—the most expensive movie at the time. Even though *Titanic* was panned by critics, who predicted it would be a massive flop and lose $10 million, it went on to earn $1.8 billion worldwide and win 11 Academy Awards.

Cameron's partners had committed to a budget of $200 million for *Avatar*, but ever-the-perfectionist Cameron pushed the envelope in computer graphics until the final cost is reportedly over $300 million, and some Hollywood gossip rags estimate the cost at over $500 million—which will make it the most expensive film ever made. It does promise to be the most technologically advanced theater production ever created.

> *Avatar is Cameron's big dream that he has been planning since his late 20s. He wrote his first treatment for the movie in 1995, before a single frame of Titanic was ever shot. At that time, the technology did not exist for him to create the scenes he wanted in the movie. It would take another 14 years before Cameron's impossible dream could be shared with the world.*

Avatar is Cameron's big dream that he has been planning since his late 20s. He wrote his first treatment for the movie in 1995, before a single frame of *Titanic* was ever shot. At that time, the technology did not exist for him to create the scenes he wanted in the movie. It would take another 14 years before Cameron's impossible dream could be shared with the world. Many of the things that audiences will see in *Avatar* are so high-tech that new names were created for the processes involved in making the photo-realistic digital characters and scenes, which make up two-thirds of the film.

The other third of the film involves live actors and sets that are seamlessly merged so that the viewer will not be able to notice the difference. Live action sequences were shot in New Zealand, where Cameron commissioned Peter Jackson's Weta company to work on *Avatar*. In fact, it was when Cameron saw the digitally created Gollum character interacting with live actors in Lord of the Rings, that he felt it would be possible to complete his cinematic vision.

In addition, *Avatar* is shot in 3D to make the visual feast even more spectacular. The rendering for the movie required a petabyte, which is 1 million gigabytes of data usage. If *Avatar* succeeds like Cameron believes, it will mark the beginning of a new era in how movies are captured, edited, and acted.

As with any movie, its success will not come from just technical eye candy. It requires a solid script and story that can transport the audience into the lives of its characters and enliven the senses. The plot begins with the Earth running out of its natural resources in the 22nd century and SecFor, a ruthless mining corporation, has plans to pillage Pandora, a newly discovered moon on a distant planet, to help save the Earth—while pocketing billions for itself.

Avatar includes an abundant array of dazzling landscapes, flora and fauna on the inhospitable planet. Because the atmosphere is toxic to humans, a hybrid creature made from the DNA of humans and the native Na'vi is created and given the name Avatar. Sam Worthington, who was the hybrid robot-human character in *Terminator Salvation*, plays Jake Sully, a paraplegic former Marine who volunteers to have his consciousness infused into one of the Avatars. His mission is to infiltrate the blue, 10-foot-tall native inhabitants and learn more about them, but he is unaware of SecFor's nefarious plan. The story unfolds as Jake is accepted into the Na'vi culture and becomes romantically involved with warrior princess Neytiri. He finds himself caught between an awaking perception of morality versus blind duty to mission.

Will Cameron's reputation as an unstoppable force in Hollywood come to an abrupt end, or will he continue to pioneer innovative movies that transform imagination into digital reality? You can be the judge when it opens in theaters. Whatever happens, it will be a testament to the power of a dream and an inspiration for those risk-taking entrepreneurs who are vital to a sustainable and even vibrant economy.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Health: Beyond the naked eye

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Since the opening of the Commonwealth Health Center in 1986, it has been the victim of the "sink or swim" budgetary syndrome in both good and bad times. Policymakers can't figure it out. So they opted to add their spin while ignoring their own grand sense of complacency, turning their new toys of complaint culture and complacency into shallow weapons of non-solutions. They completely ignore their role to finding realistic answers to complex health issues in constructive and sober fashion.

The NMI has careened in and out of the "good and bad times." But I have never seen real resolve to providing sufficient funds for new medical equipment, requisite supplies and competitive salaries for medical and ancillary staff. We usually defer it to the legend "Three Grain of Rice" syndrome when addressing the health care needs of our people. It reached a crisis level and we're all scrambling for answers at the eleventh hour. And it means more for far less, given the heavy decline in revenue generation.

We expect miracles in self-inflicted catastrophic cases and debilitating lifetime illnesses. We ignore the fact that everything begins with the self or the three people we know best: Me, Myself and I. Friends, like a career, it begins with a personal resolve to move from A to B. For instance, if you splurge wildly as an acute Type 2 diabetic, you'd have rough bouts with hypertension, blurry visions, stroke or heart attack. It's all in the palm of your hands.

The emphasis should have consistently been on preventive health care. We should employ public health education programs encouraging healthy habits, from food to personal hygiene. Imagine the voice of young students in 1986 expressing the need to brush your teeth after meals and before bedtime. This lesson came from the hard work of teachers and public health professionals who visited schools even when I was in grammar school. It took several decades to see the positive results of public health education programs take their permanent seat among pupils. This paradigm must continue! After all, it definitely and certainly works!

Amidst what's politically correct, there hovers the instant soba mindset that demands the same solutions when dealing with catastrophic medical cases. For instance, a drunk crushes his skull and rib cage in a near fatal auto accident or a heavy smoker and liquor sucker is brought in for serious cardiovascular problems. The first patient requires divine intervention to survive; the second isn't going to get anywhere even if we bring in the best cardiologist from the West Coast. Damage to major organs is woefully difficult to deal with in an ambulatory hospital. Therefore, we have to adequately convey some sense of gratitude to our doctors, nurses and ancillary staff for doing their damnedest under limited and stressful conditions.

Indeed, there are issues plaguing our people at a level that requires constructive and collective review by all concerned. For instance, assorted cancer, cardiovascular problems and Type 2 diabetes have skyrocketed over the last three decades. Are these the results of lifestyle issues or is the genesis of cancer in the contaminated water from PCBs dumped by the military near water reservoirs decades ago or both? I mean, these lethal contaminants must have percolated to water lenses, subsequently consumed by our people and have now started showing their ugly fangs in fatal illnesses.

Friends, we can no longer ignore that the culprit is both monetary and local resolve to take the first step together in a thousand mile journey. Health issues will continue to haunt us given its complexity and a highly costly beast. We can't judge the weather by the waves on surface water for we need to dive into the undercurrents to see what's really downstairs beyond what the naked eye could see. *Si yuus maase`*!

Letters to the Editor

Keeping the CNMI Judiciary transparent

Recently published was a letter to you from CNMI citizen Mr. Roger N. Ludwick, who has been reviewing government Web pages with the view that good and timely communications will encourage participatory democracy. The justices, judges and staff of the CNMI Judiciary, the third branch of government, wholeheartedly agree with the premise. Toward those ends the CNMI Judiciary maintains a Web site (http://www.justice.gov.mp) and provides on an as-it-happens basis other outreach communications concerning the activities of the Judiciary.

On closer inspection Mr. Ludwick will find on the above referenced Web site, by going first to "Administration" and then "Reports," the Judiciary's 2008 Annual Report, the most current, its 2010 Budget and the 2009 NCSC Supreme and Superior Court Administrative Functions Report, about all of which he expressed an interest. He will also find on the Home page in the top left corner notice of the first meeting of the Judicial Council, the initial product of NCSC reports, and recommendations.

In terms of being current, visitors to the site will find the Clerk of the Superior Court keeps the court's calendar updated weekly. The calendar lists all the case numbers, parties and type of each hearing to be held by the five judges during the current week. The appellate calendar for the Supreme Court, recently announced for 2010, is also available on the site. The text of the most recent *State of the Judiciary* delivered in October in the Supreme Court Chambers is available on the Web site also. This presentation was recorded and played many times on the cable television channels. Information pertaining to the most recent activities of the Judiciary can be found by clicking on the links in the top right corner of the home page under "Court News." We archive those releases on the Judiciary's Web site while they remain pertinent. Directories, forms and lists of court costs are among other types of user information available at the CNMI Judiciary's Web page.

The most recent and past Supreme and Superior Court case decisions, dating back to 1996 and 1989 respectively, can be read in their entirety by following the "Law Revision" link at the bottom right of the Home page. While on the Commonwealth Law Revision Commission Web site, if one clicks on "Rules" and then "Legal Documents," one can find all the Commonwealth rules for court procedure, the CNMI Constitution, and Covenant, among other important documents to be found there.

We generally concur with the thrust of Mr. Ludwick's comments about government communications, and believe in the broad community benefit derived by keeping the Judiciary Branch's out reach and public information resources as up-to-date and all encompassing as possible.

Jim Stowell
PIO, CNMI Supreme Court

'Troubling' accounting process

I am very concerned about the collection of information currently underway at the Federal Ombudsman's Office for several reasons and I think everyone else should be concerned as well.

First off there are the concerns raised by Attorney Woodruff. There are no guarantees on how the information collected will be used and how long the data will be kept. I think it's safe to say that ICE can get a hold of that data, if they so desire. Fortunately, that is a minor concern for most legal residents of the CNMI. There are bigger issues at stake.

I don't claim to be a lawyer, but I remember from back in my school days that the Paperwork Reduction Act governs how federal government agencies gather data. It's my understanding that all proper and legal requests for information must have an OMB control number on the form to ensure that the form complies not only with the law but also that the data collected truly is required by the government. Furthermore, it states just how the data may be used and for what purposes it may be used.

I looked very closely at the registration form prepared by the Federal Ombudsman's Office and there is no OMB control number. There is also no Paperwork Reduction Act notice on the form. These facts alone mean that the registration form is not compulsory. You can fill it out if you want to, but there is no requirement to do it. It's almost frightening to see that the form doesn't have any statements on how exactly the data will be used and who will have access to that data. Some may find solace in the statements of the Ombudsperson that the data will be used only for the count of aliens, but without an OMB control number and a clear Privacy Act statement, we can only trust her and every other alphabet soup government agency that could possibly access the information.

I think that all residents of the CNMI, whether they are aliens or citizens, deserve a proper and legal count of long term guest workers in the CNMI that complies not just with Public Law 110-229 but every other law that governs how government agencies gather, collect and store data.

Jack Woods
Chalan Kanoa, Saipan

Mammograms: See past the controversy

By MARY SANCHEZ
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Backlash to the shifting guidelines on breast cancer screenings highlighted one rather disheartening truth: When it comes to our health, we women may not be as empowered as we think. How else to explain the torrent unleashed when it was put before us that mammograms are not as effective for some women? This shouldn't have been new information. Screenings for younger women have always been controversial when weighed against their benefits.

Word has gotten out so well that even relatively young women can die of breast cancer that it has twisted our ability to accept new research. Even logical research, such as the task force report that brought more scrutiny to giving mammograms to women under 50.

How in control of our health can we claim to be without a more careful analysis of current testing—and its rate of success?

Admittedly, I'm complicit. I've penned numerous columns about young women in their 20s, 30s and 40s diagnosed with, and some dying of breast cancers. Doing so likely added to assumptions about risks; not that I'm apologizing.

I still believe that mammography is the best test readily available.

Personally, I'll keep to annual checks that began at 40, due to some family history. All the pink water bottles, ribbons, T-shirts and other items are safe in this house.

But now that the initial frenzy has subsided, it's time to apply a bit more intellect and a bit less emotion.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force raised the point that for women under 50, mammograms may not reduce mortality enough in asymptomatic women under to counter other issues that arise with the screenings.

That's largely a judgment call. Obviously, it is one that many women and doctors rejected. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius practically had to issue an apology for even allowing the task force to report facts that fly in the face of public perception.

Mammograms in women under 50 give many false positives and increase the likelihood of more testing—including possibly unnecessary biopsies and treatment of cancers that wouldn't have caused health problems if left alone. Another problem is the incredible anxiety for women and their families when the screenings detect even the faintest possibility of an abnormality.

Yet the mere suggestion that mammography is not the literal savior women want it to be that seemed to cause the greatest reaction.

Breast cancer deaths have been reduced 30 percent since 1990. In addition to increased screenings, the decline is credited to improved treatment, women living healthier lifestyles and a decrease in the use of postmenopausal hormones.

I suspect many young women would be equally surprised to know the risk that a 40-year-old woman will die of breast cancer in the next 10 years is 0.19 percent, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Breast cancer, contrary to common belief, is not the leading cause of death for women. Heart disease is, by far. But breast cancer is often the scariest way for women to contemplate death.

An axiom of journalism is the truth shall set you free. Well, the truth about mammograms is not what a lot of younger women want to believe.

On its Web site, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, an organization supporting breast cancer research, asked women to react calmly. Komen echoed the task force's advice, stressing women should become better educated, know their risks, consult with doctors and make their own decisions.

That's the same advice I always heard from a friend. She discovered her breast cancer when something didn't seem right as she breastfed her son. Lately, I've looked back at notes taken during our conversations. She lived a remarkable five years with end-stage cancer, dying last year at 42.

"I think you just really have to look inside of yourself," she once said. "Regardless of what any scientific study says or any scholar, what matters is you listen to yourself and your needs."

Sound, calm advice from one who knew much about the cancer the rest of us fear from afar.

Mary Sanchez is an opinion-page columnist for The Kansas City Star. Readers may write to her at: Kansas City Star, 1729 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, Mo. 64108-1413, or via e-mail at msanchez@kcstar.com.

The Weather

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲84	▼75
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼76
Yap	Sunny	▲87	▼77
Chuuk	Rain	▲89	▼77
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲88	▼81
Kosrae	Showers	▲88	▼77
Majuro	Showers	▲84	▼79

Around The Globe

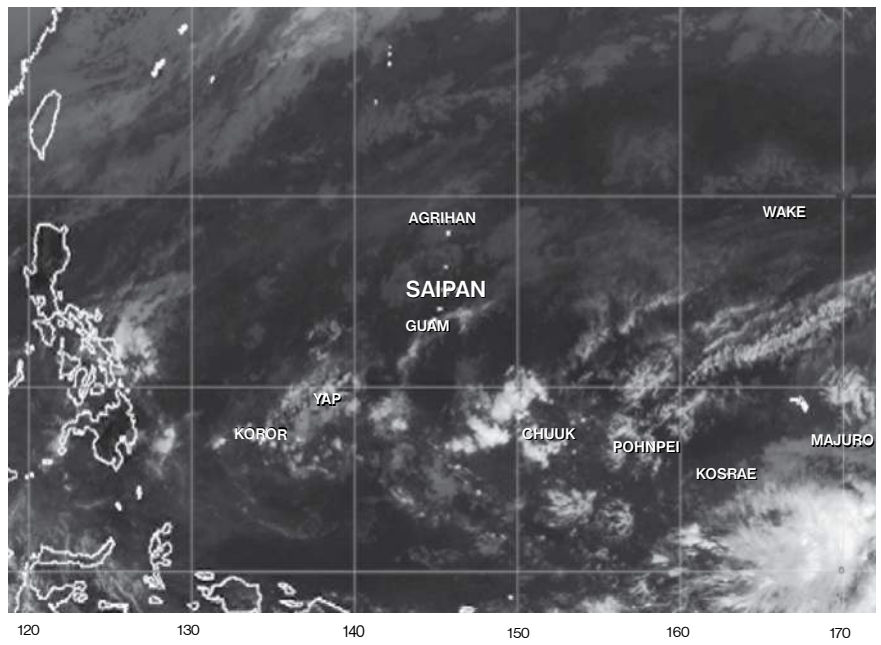
Auckland	Sunny	▲63	▼50
Beijing	Cold	▲23	▼10
Hong Kong	Showers	▲65	▼63
Honolulu	Showers	▲78	▼69
London	Rain/Snow	▲37	▼30
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲72	▼50
Manila	Sunny	▲85	▼73
Melbourne	Rain	▲72	▼53
Miami	Thunderstorms	▲80	▼69
New York	Sunny	▲34	▼23
Osaka	Cloudy	▲40	▼33
Paris	Cold	▲27	▼20
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲39	▼16
Rome	Rain	▲46	▼38
Salem	Rain	▲47	▼40
San Francisco	Cloudy	▲58	▼48
Seoul	Flurries	▲28	▼18
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲50	▼36
Washington, DC	Sunny	▲40	▼26

Tides

Saipan Harbor

2:06 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.5 Feet
9:25 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
2:37 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.3 Feet
7:03 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends from 25N136E southwestward past 21N130E with cloudiness and patchy rain along and up to 600 miles northwest of the front. Trade-wind convergence is causing scattered showers from near Palau and Yap to Chuuk in an area between 6N and 10N from 135E to 153E. A circulation along the equator near 171E is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms from southeast of Kosrae eastward across Tarawa in an area south of a line from 2N164E to 4N175E. A trade-wind disturbance is near 7N180 with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms just east of Majuro within 100 miles of a line from 7N173E to 6N180. A shear line near Wake Island extends eastward from 21N158e to 21N170E then northeastward to beyond 23N180. Scattered showers are within 40 miles of the shear line.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Sunday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Monday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:01 AM	6:25 PM
Friday	7:50 AM	7:18 PM
Saturday	8:34 AM	8:09 PM
Sunday	9:15 AM	8:58 PM
Monday	9:53 AM	9:46 PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 12, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:30am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	4, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1 via ICN	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1 via GUM	1, 3, 5, 6, 7
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

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Labor completes work on worker unpaid wage claims

The Labor Department has completed its processing of unpaid wage claims from 2008 and all prior years, Deputy Secretary Cinta M. Kaipat announced Wednesday.

"The department published notices over a six-month period to register unpaid wage or other claims. That period ended on Oct. 30, 2009," Kaipat said. "We have finished processing the claims of all the foreign workers who registered. We have held hearings as necessary, and we have completed the hearings in all the cases. Nearly all of the orders have been issued, and the orders in the few remaining cases will be issued shortly."

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

In this file photo, alien workers line up at the Department of Labor during the issuance of umbrella permits. The department now says it has completed its processing of unpaid wage claims from 2008 and all prior years.

Total claims under $450,000

The total amount of these outstanding unpaid wage claims was under $450,000, Kaipat estimated. "We don't have an exact number because some of the claims came in without any amount stated," she said.

Kaipat

However, there never was a total of $6.1 million in unpaid wage claims as was publicized many, many times over in the press, Kaipat emphasized. That total was never correct, she said. "In fact, now that we have more data, we know that the Commonwealth has a far lower rate of unpaid wage claims among alien workers than any U.S., European, Australian or New Zealand jurisdiction that publishes data in these regards," Kaipat said.

First, it is important to distinguish between claims that are and are not covered by labor bonds. Unpaid wage, medical expense, and repatriation claims are covered by employer bonds. "However, claims such as unpaid wages for illegal work, liquidated damages, workers compensation, cosmetic surgery and other non-essential medical treatment, common law spouse claims, and other similar matters are not covered by employer bonds," Kaipat said. Once the claims that were never intended to be covered by the Labor Department's bonding system are taken out of the calculation, the number and amount of claims decreases dramatically.

Second, it is also important to understand that—just like any other insurance policy—bonds have limits on what they are required to pay. "We distinguish between claims that are within the standard limitations of bond coverage and those that are not," Kaipat said. Employer bonds typically cover three months of wages, $3,000 in medical expenses, and full fare for repatriation tickets. This means that the bonding system assumes that workers will bring their claims promptly.

However, under the old labor system, workers often waited until the very end of their work permit period to bring their claims. This meant that all of the unpaid wages beyond the three-month limitation were not covered by bonds.

"P.L. 15-108 fixed this problem by limiting the period within which workers could bring claims," Kaipat said. "A worker must seek to resolve disputes promptly. This is a better system than waiting months and months to bring a stale claim after the employers and witnesses may be long gone." When the claims that are beyond bond coverage are eliminated, the number and amount of claims falls even further.

Claims being paid

The department expects that a substantial number of workers either have been or in the near future will be paid by the bonding companies. "Some bonding companies have paid voluntarily once the claims were put on the Hearing Office docket," Kaipat said. But other bonding companies have appealed to the Secretary and to the courts. The Attorney General's Office is handling the appeals that have been filed in federal and Commonwealth courts by the bonding companies.

Access to courts

"The department still believes strongly that the proper venue for expeditious resolution of worker claims against employers and bonding companies is in the courts," Kaipat said.

The department advertised for unpaid wage and other claims and set up the special hearings on bond claims in response to two court opinions requiring workers to press their claims first at the Labor Department before going to court.

Of the approximately $450,000 in claims, only about $54,000 has been paid as a result of the bond claims hearings. Other claims have been appealed.

"It is ironic," Kaipat noted, "that when we told workers to go to small claims court, the bonding companies objected that they should be in Labor Department hearings. When we brought them before the Administrative Hearing Office for hearings on whether they should pay, they argued that they should be in court."

Ultimately, Kaipat expects that the department will prevail in the courts, and that the bonding companies will be ordered to pay.

Further action in the courts

"We have not ignored claims that are not covered by bonds at all or that are beyond the standard coverage provided by labor bonds," Kaipat said. "All of those claims have been referred to the Attorney General for action in the courts as appropriate."

Orders from the Administrative Hearing Office have been issued stating the name of the claimant and the case in which the claim arose. Those orders are published on the department's Web site.

"We expect that the Attorney General's Office will determine which claims might be collected through the court system and which claims are simply uncollectible at this point. Claims may be totally uncollectible because either the employer or the bonding company or both are no longer in business and there is no person or entity that a court could order to pay," said Kaipat.

The Labor Department wanted to use experienced collection lawyers to pursue all unpaid worker claims in the courts, Kaipat disclosed. "We thought this would get the fastest action and the best results." However, the Attorney General's office decided that it would pursue these claims for workers in the courts.

Extra time to earn

If a claim is uncollectible, then the worker who has made the claim cannot use that claim as a basis for remaining in the Commonwealth. However, Kaipat explained that the umbrella permit system essentially allows these workers—whose claims can never be collected—to have an extra chance to work in the Commonwealth to recoup their losses.

"Under the normal system, these workers with uncollectible claims would be repatriated," Kaipat said. "However, their umbrella permit gives them repayment of a kind, in that they are allowed to remain in the Commonwealth, which is what they would like to do, and to continue to seek work for an extra period of time. This is a way of meeting, in some part, any inequity in the system in the past."

The Labor Department discussed this aspect of the umbrella permit system with representatives of foreign worker groups, and it was agreed that if the claims were totally uncollectible, an opportunity to "earn it back" would be the next best thing that could be offered to affected workers.

Future unpaid claims

The court opinions ordering the Labor Department to hold bond claim hearings cover only the Nonresident Workers Act, not the current labor law, Kaipat said. However, the department will continue the bond claims process for 2009 cases.

The notice for registration of any unpaid wage claims from administrative orders issued in 2009 was published two weeks ago, the registration period will end on Dec. 30, 2009, for orders issued in the first three quarters of 2009. Kaipat announced that the Labor Department expects to finish all the 2009 claims by March 30, 2010. ***(PR/Department of Labor)***

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/s/ **JOSEPH K.P. VILLAGOMEZ**
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
Director, P&S

Northern Mariana Islands RETIREMENT FUND

PUBLIC NOTICE
NMI Retirement Fund
Group Health Life Insurance Program (GHLIP)
December 16, 2009

Please be advised that Netcare Health and Life Insurance (Moylan's) has terminated its contract to provide Life Insurance Coverage for employees of the CNMI Government and Retirees effective December 15, 2009.

The GHLIP is in the process of issuing an Emergency RFP for a new Life Insurance Carrier, and anticipate placing coverage with another company within the next several weeks. In the meantime, any claims inquiry should be directed to the GHLIP, NMI Retirement Fund Building, Isa Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan.

If you have any questions, or concerns, please call our office at telephone number 322-3863.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

/s/ MARK A. AGUON
Administrator

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PUBLIC NOTICE
December 15, 2009

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION DIVISION (DCD) OF THE COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY THRU ITS CHAIRWOMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE DCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD A REGULAR MEETING THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2009 AT 10:00 A.M. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CDA CONFERENCE ROOM, SECOND FLOOR, WAKIN'S BUILDING, CHALAN PALE ARNOLD ROAD, SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
1. Roll Call
II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES
1. September 10, 2009
IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
V. REPORTS
1. Financial Report – DCD
2. Loan Reports
   a. Loan Applications
   b. Approved Loans & Bank Guarantees
   c. Loan Status/Receivables Report
   d. DCD Performing Loan Summary/Delinquency & Litigation
VI. OLD BUSINESS
VII. NEW BUSINESS
1. Health Professional Corporation (HPC)
VIII. OTHER MATTERS
IX. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. ***(Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session)***

/s/MARCIE M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman, DCD Board of Directors

Travel agents, media reps attend academy on CNMI

Fifty-six travel agents and media representatives from major cities across Japan recently attended the annual Marianas Tourism Academy 2009, held Dec. 7-11.

Sponsored by the Marianas Visitors Authority and the Japan Saipan Travel Association, the Marianas Tourism Academy gives travel industry affiliates the opportunity to familiarize themselves with attractions, activities and facilities in this resort destination.

"Marianas Tourism Academy provides our travel industry affiliates with an educational environment to familiarize themselves with our many wonderful attractions, activities and facilities," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "It's a popular and positive marketing tool to increase destination awareness for the front line travel agency personnel who help visitors plan their trips and ultimately sell our destination."

Participants were welcomed with dinner on the white sand beach of award-wining Managaha island. During the academy, they attended seminars, took optional tours, conducted hotel inspections, and visited businesses specializing in various marketing segments.

This year's Tourism Academy was made possible through the support of several MVA members: Continental Airlines, Northwest Airlines, JSTA, Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, Northern Marianas Dive Operators Association, Fiesta Resort & Spa, Aqua Resort Club, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Saipan World Resort, Tasi Tours & Transportation, Pau Pau Tours, Top Development Inc., Saipan Sanko, Pacific Development Inc., Sand Castle, Mariana Resort & Spa, and other option tour companies. ***(MVA)***

MVA

Travel agents and media reps Japan and Saipan-da last week at the award-winning Managaha Island in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Over 50 agents joined last week's annual Marianas Tourism Academy to experience Saipan, Tinian and Rota firsthand so they can develop new products and better sell the destination to potential visitors.

CYCLING CHAMPS MVA

This month's Hell of the Marianas bike race on Dec. 5 in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands has proven an international attraction for cyclists and media near and far. Pictured from left at Pacific Islands Club (PIC) Saipan are PIC Sales and Marketing Manager for Russian Market Elly Stoilova, cyclist Sergey Makarenko, cyclist and 2009 Hell of the Marianas champion Alexander Bazhenov, cyclist Evgeny Smorchkov, Marianas Visitors Authority Marketing Specialist Tatiana Babauta, and GRAN' magazine chief editor Mikhail Nepogodin. Makarenko has participated in the XTERRA Saipan Championships and Tagaman Triathlon for the last three years. Bazhenov took a second place in Russian Championship 2008, has placed 25 in the World Championships, and took first place in Russian Championship in 2003. Smorchov is a coach in a school for Olympic reserves.

CHURCH CLEANUP PHOTO BY RICK BABAUTA

Members of the Saipan Presbyterian Church conduct a cleanup along the roadsides of Chinatown Wednesday. The Korean church members have been regularly cleaning the area as part of their community involvement program.

MATH WIZARDS

The students successfully participated in the Math Court Regional Competition held on Dec. 12, 2009 at Saipan Southern High School. From left to right, Hanbert Jeong of Marianas Baptist Academy, 1st Place (Gold) in Algebra 2 and 2nd Place (Silver) in Geometry; Manatsu Omori of Marianas Baptist Academy, 2nd Place (Silver) in Algebra 2; and Jeremiah Rey Perez of Calvary Christian Academy, 1st Place (Gold) in Geometry. At the back is MBA coach Tony Flores.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday to Jonah T. Reyes, who is celebrating his 10th birthday today! May your special day be filled with happiness and joy! We love you and may God bless you with many more years to come! Greetings come from your families.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday greetings to Richelle Layan Becheserak Mungwaath, who is celebratingher sweet 16th today, Dec. 17! Greetings come from your family. Also, belated happy 10th birthday to Rachelle Surech Layan Mungwaath, who marked her special day on Dec. 15, 2009.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy birthday greetings to the best mom in the world, Antonia Ignacio Kisa, who is celebrating her special day today, Dec. 17! Wishing you good health and more birthdays to come. Enjoy your day, relax, and have fun! We love you and miss you! Greetings come from Maricar, Manny, Joseph, Joshua, Annie, Chris, Zay, Bing and Krissy.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy first birthday to Princess Arie'an Cheyenne DLG Quitano! Greetings come from the family!

SHRM highlights planning for new workforce era

By JOVAN I. FRED
jovan_fred@saipantribune.com
REPORTER-TRAINEE

Many representatives of different companies on the island participated in the annual conference of the Society for Human Resource Management held Thursday last week at the Fiesta Resort & Spa's Hibiscus Ballroom.

Close to a hundred SHRM members joined the daylong conference that had the theme "A New CNMI Workforce Era."

Guam Department of Labor director Maria Connolley and Guam Labor's Alien Labor Processing & Certification Division director Greg Massey shared their knowledge about getting H1 and H2 visas for foreign workers.

David Gulick, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Honolulu district director, was among the federal officials who made presentations about immigration and labor changes under the newly implemented federalization law.

The Workforce Investment Agency also presented on how to obtain local talent and WIA funding to help develop a company's existing workforce.

SHRM president Eric L. Plinske, in an interview with *Saipan Tribune,* said, "Several speakers from NMC's recruiting talent talked about some of the resources [on island] that will help employers attract and develop the workforce they have and get employees from the college and trades institutes. The resources are always there, but sometimes there is very little access. The nonresident labor market was always represented, but not front center and this will change because the gates have been closed."

"Since only certain visas are being issued, the two years given should allow companies to have a plan on how to develop their existing team or their replacements," he added.

The conference, Plinske said, was intended to give the community a clear vision on labor issues and the challenges they will face in the future.

Business

Abu Dhabi seeks to terminate Citi stock purchase

NEW YORK (AP)—Citigroup Inc. said Tuesday that the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority has filed a claim against the bank seeking to either terminate a deal to buy $7.5 billion worth of its stock or receive damages of more than $4 billion.

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world, invested $7.5 billion in Citigroup in November 2007, offering the New York-based bank needed capital to offset big losses from mortgages and other investments.

The fund received equity units that paid a high annual dividend. The units were to be converted into Citigroup common shares at a price of up to $37.24 a share between March 15, 2010, and Sept. 15, 2011, making the fund one of Citi's largest shareholders with a 4.9 percent stake.

At the time, the fund's managing director said the investment reflected its confidence in "Citi's potential to build shareholder value." But the bank proved to be among the hardest hit by the credit crisis and rising loan defaults, and received one of the biggest taxpayer bailout packages—$45 billion in aid and protection against losses on more than $300 billion in assets.

Since the end of November 2007, Citi shares have tumbled 89 percent from the $33 range to less than $4. At $37.24 per share, the conversion price would amount to more than 10 times Citi's closing stock price Tuesday of $3.56.

The fund's arbitration claim, filed in New York, alleges "fraudulent misrepresentations" in connection with the sale.

In a statement, Citi said it believes the allegations are "entirely without merit and intends to defend against them vigorously."

The company on Monday announced a deal to repay $20 billion in aid. The U.S. government also will sell its 34 percent stake in Citi, which it had swapped for $25 billion in bailout loans.

Boeing's 787 jetliner makes first test flight

EVERETT, Wash. (AP)—Boeing's new 787 jetliner finally got airborne Tuesday, the long-delayed inaugural flight of the world's first commercial plane constructed with half its components made from lightweight composite materials.

The sleek jet lifted off from Everett's Paine Field on a flight over Washington state, beginning an extensive testing program needed to obtain Federal Aviation Administration certification.

"It's very historical. I can't think of a thing about it that I'm not impressed with," said Joe Bierce, a flight instructor for Delta Connection in Jacksonville, Fla., who was among the 25,000 people who gathered to watch the takeoff.

The two-member crew performed a variety of basic system checks, including testing the landing gear and the flaps, before landing at Seattle's Boeing Field about three hours later. Deteriorating weather brought the plane back to earth about an hour earlier than planned.

AP

Boeing Co. employees cheer as a Boeing Co. 787 airplane takes off on its first flight Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009, at Paine Field in Everett, Wash.

"The airplane responded just as we expected," said Randy Neville, one of the two pilots. "It was a joy to fly."

Before takeoff, the aircraft paused for several minutes at the end of the runway while warming up its engines, adding to the tension for Boeing employees, customers and airline executives standing on the tarmac.

Although the runway was lined with fire trucks and other emergency vehicles, the first flight looked like a normal takeoff as the huge aircraft kicked up clouds of mist.

The plane is the first of six 787s Boeing will use in the nine-month flight-test program that will subject the planes to conditions well beyond those found in normal airline service.

Chicago-based Boeing, which has orders for 840 of the jets, plans to make the first delivery to Japan's All Nippon Airways late next year.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Democrats propose $50B for jobs-boosting projects

WASHINGTON (AP)—Responding to calls among rank-and-file Democrats for more infrastructure spending, House leaders Tuesday unveiled a plan to add almost $50 billion in spending on highways, housing and school repair as part of a year-end plan to create jobs. The measure is aimed at keeping the fragile economic recovery on track with money for teachers, the unemployed and small businesses. A vote is planned for Wednesday. The Senate, however, won't act until next month at the earliest and has less of an appetite for another costly round of economic stimulus measures.

FDIC approves sharp increase in 2010 budget to $4B

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. said Tuesday its 2010 budget will jump to $4 billion from $2.6 billion this year, and announced plans to hire more than 1,600 mostly temporary employees as it continues to grapple with a rising number of bank failures. The FDIC's board voted at a public meeting to approve the 2010 budget, which includes $2.5 billion for resolving failed banks taken over by the agency. That's up from $1.3 billion in 2009. The hiring plans will bring the number of FDIC employees to 8,653. So far this year, 133 U.S. banks have succumbed to the soured economy and a cascade of loan defaults—the most in a year since 1992 at the height of the savings-and-loan crisis. They compare with 25 last year and three in 2007. The failures have cost the federal deposit insurance fund more than $30 billion so far this year.

NYC hedge fund manager indicted in trading case

NEW YORK (AP)—A wealthy Manhattan hedge fund manager and another executive embroiled in a massive insider trading case were indicted Tuesday on multiple counts of conspiracy and securities fraud. Billionaire Raj Rajaratnam had been arrested in October on a criminal complaint alleging he used inside information to make trades that generated millions of dollars in profits for a fund in his firm, the Galleon Group. There was no immediate response to a telephone message left Tuesday with his attorney. The second person indicted in the $52 million insider trading case was Danielle Chiesi, a portfolio manager at New Castle Funds LLC. Defense attorney Alan Kaufman said his client would "vigorously fight the case in court."

Nation

Obama: Senate near health care passage

WASHINGTON (AP)—Prodded by President Barack Obama, Senate Democrats won tentative backing from one holdout and worked intensely to satisfy another Tuesday as they grappled with the last, lingering disputes blocking passage of health care legislation by Christmas.

Obama

Despite the push, Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska remained publicly uncommitted—even after a private meeting with Obama.

At the White House, the president said his congressional allies were "on the precipice" of a historic accomplishment that has eluded presidents and lawmakers for generations, adding the emerging bill includes "all the criteria that I laid out" in a speech to a joint session of Congress earlier in the year.

"It is deficit-neutral. It bends the cost curve. It covers 30 million Americans who don't have health insurance, and it has extraordinary insurance reforms in there to make sure that we're preventing abuse," he said.

In the privacy of a presidential meeting, liberal supporters of the bill vented their frustration at having to abandon the last vestige of a government-run insurance option in the legislation, a slow-motion concession made over many months, most recently to moderates including Sen. Joe Lieberman, a Connecticut independent.

Two days after jolting the leadership by threatening to oppose the measure if it included an expansion of Medicare, Lieberman said that with the agreed-upon changes, "I'm going to be in a position where I can say what I've wanted to say all along: that I'm ready to vote for health care reform."

Authorities: Little chance Ore. climbers are alive

GOVERNMENT CAMP, Ore. (AP)—Two climbers missing on Mount Hood for the past five days are likely dead and a search will not resume anytime soon because of severe avalanche danger, officials said Tuesday.

Dr. Terri Schmidt, an expert on hypothermia and mountain survival, said there was less than a 1 percent chance that Anthony Vietti and Katie Nolan had survived after going missing on Friday.

The body of a third member of their party, Luke Gullberg, 26, of Des Moines, Wash., was found on the mountain Saturday. Officials have said he died of hypothermia after surviving a long fall.

Schmidt spoke at a news conference called by rescue officials. She talked with relatives of the missing climbers earlier in the day about the chances of survival in the extreme conditions on Mount Hood. Schmidt said she gave them the same statistic and they said they didn't want rescuers to be put at risk of encountering an avalanche.

Steven Rollins, a rescue leader, said search teams would not be going back up the mountain anytime soon because of avalanche dangers made worse by an ongoing storm that has created whiteout conditions.

Energy-efficient traffic lights can't melt snow

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Cities around the country that have installed energy-efficient traffic lights are discovering a hazardous downside: The bulbs don't burn hot enough to melt snow and can become crusted over in a storm—a problem blamed for dozens of accidents and at least one death.

"I've never had to put up with this in the past," said Duane Kassens, a driver from West Bend who got into a fender-bender recently because he couldn't see the lights. "The police officer told me the new lights weren't melting the snow. How is that safe?"

Many communities have switched to LED bulbs in their traffic lights because they use 90 percent less energy than the old incandescent variety, last far longer and save money. Their great advantage is also their drawback: They do not waste energy by producing heat.

ACROSS THE NATION

Evangelist Oral Roberts dies in Calif. at age 91

TULSA, Okla. (AP)—Oral Roberts, a pioneer in televangelism who founded a multimillion-dollar ministry and a university that bears his name, died Tuesday. He was 91. Roberts died of complications from pneumonia in Newport Beach, Calif., according to his spokesman, A. Larry Ross. The evangelist was hospitalized after a fall on Saturday. He had survived two heart attacks in the 1990s and a broken hip in 2006. Roberts was a pioneer who broadcast his spirit-filled revivals on television, a new frontier for religion when he started in the 1950s. He was also a forerunner of the controversial "prosperity gospel" that has come to dominate televangelism. The evangelist's "Seed-Faith" theology held that those who give to God will get things in return. "If God had not, in His sovereign will, raised up the ministry of Oral Roberts, the entire charismatic movement might not have occurred," said Jack Hayford, president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, in a statement.

Mass. 2nd-grader sent home for crucifix drawing

TAUNTON, Mass. (AP)—An 8-year-old boy was sent home from school and ordered to undergo a psychological evaluation after he was asked to make a Christmas drawing and came up with what appeared to be a stick figure of Jesus on a cross, the child's father said Tuesday. Chester Johnson told WBZ-TV that his son made the drawing on Dec. 2 after his second-grade teacher asked children to sketch something that reminded them of the holiday. Johnson said the teacher became upset when his son said he drew himself on the cross. Johnson, who is black, told WBZ he suspects racism is involved. He said he thinks the school overreacted and wants an apology.

Book 99 years overdue returned to Mass. library

NEW BEDFORD, Mass. (AP)—The book returned to the New Bedford Public Library in Massachusetts this week wasn't overdue by a week, a month or even a year. It was nearly a century overdue, and the fine came to $361.35. "Facts I Ought to Know about the Government of My Country" was supposed to have been returned by May 10, 1910. Stanley Dudek told the Standard Times newspaper he came across the book while going through things that had belonged to his mother, who died about 10 years ago. He decided that returning the book to the city was the right thing to do. The overdue book fine was a penny a day in 1910. But Dudek wasn't asked to pay it. The library plans to display the book in its special collection.

Asia

AP

A Turkish soldier with the NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stands guard, right, at the scene of a suicide car bomb attack in Kabul, Afghanistan on Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009.

Car bomber strikes near former VP home in Kabul

KABUL (AP)—A suicide car bomber struck Tuesday near the home of a former Afghan vice president and a hotel frequented by Westerners, killing at least eight people and wounding nearly 40 in a neighborhood considered one of Kabul's safest.

The blast was the deadliest in the heart of the city since an Oct. 28 assault on a guesthouse filled with U.N. staffers killed eight people, including five U.N. workers.

Tuesday's attack occurred at mid-morning in Kabul's heavily guarded Wazir Akbar Khan district, an area favored by foreigners and wealthy Afghans.

Security officials at the scene suspected the target was the home of former Vice President Ahmad Zia Massoud—brother of legendary anti-Taliban fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was killed in an al-Qaida suicide bombing two days before the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

"Of course we were the target," said Shah Asmat, an aide to the former vice president. "Before, the Taliban killed Massoud. Now, they tried to kill his brother."

Ahmad Zia Massoud, who served in President Hamid Karzai's first administration that expired last month, was home but he was not injured.

Mullen: Most of surge troops will arrive by August 2010

KABUL (AP)—The top U.S. military officer said Tuesday that he's confident that most of the 30,000 additional troops that are being sent to Afghanistan will be there by August.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters traveling with him in Afghanistan that the first 16,000 troops who already have orders will be in on schedule.

On Monday, Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, the second-highest ranking U.S. general in Afghanistan, said the rapid escalation of American troops would take longer than expected, possibly as long as 11 months. Rodriguez blamed the delay on the logistical challenges the military faces in bringing in so many forces so quickly.

But Mullen said that he's "reasonably confident" the logistics can be made to work, although "I want a plan B because life doesn't always work out."

20,000 evacuated as Philippine volcano oozes lava

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines' most active volcano oozed lava and shot up plumes of ash Tuesday, forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes and face the possibility of a bleak Christmas in a shelter.

State volcanologists raised the alert level on the cone-shaped, 8,070-foot (2,460-meter) Mayon volcano overnight to two steps below a major eruption after ash explosions.

Dark orange lava fragments glowed in the dark as they trickled down the mountain slope overnight. Renato Solidum, head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said the activity could get worse in coming days.

"It's already erupting," Solidum told The Associated Press.

More than 20,000 people were evacuated to safety by nightfall Tuesday, said Gov. Joey Salceda of Albay province, where Mayon is located about 210 miles (340 kilometers) southeast of Manila.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Japan needs more time for decision on US base

TOKYO (AP)—Japan needs several more months to decide on the relocation of a major U.S. military base on the southern island of Okinawa, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said Tuesday, a delay likely to frustrate Washington. The U.S. had hoped for a resolution by year-end, but Hatoyama said a hasty decision would be irresponsible. Okinawa residents complain about base-related noise, pollution and crime, and many want the airfield closed and its functions moved off the island entirely. A 2006 reorganization plan, made under the previous conservative government, was aimed at lightening the load on Okinawa, which hosts more than half the 47,000 U.S. troops in Japan under a security pact forged after World War II.

Report: NKorea presses for lifting of UN sanctions

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea told a senior U.S. envoy that U.N. sanctions imposed on the communist regime for its nuclear defiance must be lifted, a report said Wednesday. North Korean officials conveyed the message to Stephen Bosworth, President Barack Obama's envoy on North Korea, during the diplomat's trip to Pyongyang last week for high-level talks, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported, citing an unidentified diplomatic source. South Korean officials in charge of nuclear negotiations were not immediately available for comment.

World

Outcome unclear as leaders arrive at climate conference

COPENHAGEN (AP)—The success of the U.N. climate conference hung in the balance Tuesday as China and the U.S. deadlocked over whether Beijing will allow the world to check its books and verify promised cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

Princes, presidents and premiers crowded into a vast hall for the formal opening of the largest summit ever held on climate change, but attention was on the leaders of the world's two largest polluters—President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao—who plan to arrive for the final days of talks on a framework to control heat-trapping gases.

Negotiators who have been working for 10 days floated new draft documents on lesser issues. But they left open the vexing questions of emissions targets for industrial countries, billions of dollars a year in funding for poor countries to contend with global warming, and verifying the actions of emerging powers like China to ensure they keep their promises.

"In these very hours, we are balancing between success and failure," said conference president Connie Hedegaard of Denmark. Success is possible, she said, "but I must also warn you: We can fail—probably without anyone really wanting it so, but because we spent too much time on posturing, on repeating positions, on formalities."

The rest of the 115 leaders were expected to arrive before Friday's summit finale to sign a political outline of a global warming treaty that would set limits on carbon dioxide pollution by the United States, China, India as well as extending emissions targets for the 37 countries regulated under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Confab emits share of carbon

COPENHAGEN (AP)—If they fail to reach a climate deal in Copenhagen, world leaders flying in their private jets and huddling in five-star hotels will have little to show for their efforts beyond a big, fat carbon footprint.

The U.N. estimates 40,500 tons of carbon dioxide will be pumped into the atmosphere during the 12-day conference—90 percent of it from flights. The rest comes from waste and electricity related to transport to and from the conference center and lodging in and around the Danish city.

Most of the leaders were flying either on commercial airlines or government-owned jets and Sweden was one of the few to announce plans to offset those aviation emissions—something it does routinely. Most are doing nothing to boost their green credentials and some saw no reason to treat their trip to the U.N. climate talks any differently.

"This prime minister is the last person in India or maybe even the world to do anything for effect," said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's spokesman Harish Khare.

Israeli police officer beaten, injured by settlers

JERUSALEM (AP)—Angry settlers beat and seriously injured a female Israeli police officer Tuesday, police said, as she tried to enforce a government ban on new housing construction in Jewish West Bank settlements.

It was the most serious clash between settlers and authorities since the building restrictions were imposed last month. Settlers have vowed to defy the orders and have confronted government inspectors, scuffling with them.

Tuesday's incident went beyond the usual pushing and shoving.

Police spokesman Gil Elhadad said about 100 settlers, most of them teenagers, burned tires and blocked the entrance to the settlement of Tsofit, in the northern part of the West Bank near the line with Israel. He said some of them jumped the police officer and beat her, breaking several ribs. She was taken to a hospital for treatment of serious injuries, he said. He did not give her name or age.

WORLD BRIEFS

Mexico's Calderon proposes major political reform

MEXICO CITY (AP)—President Felipe Calderon is proposing runoff elections in future presidential contests and re-election for many officials in Mexico's most dramatic political reform attempt in decades. The proposal announced Tuesday would still limit presidents to a single, six-year term, but it would relax Mexico's ironclad ban on re-election of other officials. It also would allow independent candidates to run for public offices and would permit citizen initiatives. "The idea is to give citizens more power, to give them the capacity to shape public life and to strengthen our democracy," Calderon said in a televised address. But reforms would require a string of tough-to-pass constitutional amendments and they are likely to come under fire from established parties who could see their power eroded by the changes.

Britain vows to end arrest threats to Israeli VIPs

LONDON (AP)—Britain pledged Tuesday to reform a peculiar legal power that lets judges order the arrest of visiting politicians and generals—a threat currently focused on Israeli visitors that, one day, might be invoked against Barack Obama or Vladimir Putin. Lawyers working with Palestinian activists in recent years have sought the arrest of senior Israeli civilian and military figures under terms of "universal jurisdiction." This ill-defined legal concept empowers judges to issue arrest warrants for visiting officials accused of war crimes in a foreign conflict. Their latest target is Tzipi Livni, Israel's former foreign minister and current opposition leader, who staunchly defends Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip. Israel's government confirmed Tuesday that she canceled a planned London trip this month after her office received news of a secretly issued arrest warrant awaiting her arrival.

Sierra Leone woman appeals for right to be chief

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP)—A woman barred from running for chief of her district because of her gender said Tuesday she has appealed for a new election and a place on the ballot. Elizabeth Kumba Simbiqa Torto said she wants a new election because she believes the officials' decision barring her from running is discriminatory. She said local officials told her custom and tradition prevented her from running for the post in the Dec. 5 election in Kono District, in the eastern part of the small African country. "I will not allow myself to be discriminated against and humiliated because of culture and tradition, which should not interfere with my right," she said.

Environment

It's a wrap: Use recycled or natural wrappings this season

By JACKIE LOOHAUIS-BENNETT
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Red and green have been the favorite holiday gift wrap colors since the 14th century. But this year, the front-running colors are green—and green.

"Green" as in money-conscious and eco-friendly. Most gift wrap gets thrown out, so why spend a lot on it? And because a Stanford University finding estimates that the holidays generate 5 million tons of wrapping waste, recycled, recyclable and natural wrappings are great gifts to give the planet.

"I don't know anyone who is not money-challenged this year. And the cool thing about being 'green' is that green can be very frugal," says Sandy Sandler, founder of the nonprofit Crafters 4 Kids project site and creator of the Bowdabra ribbon craft tool.

Sandler suggests anyone searching for recession-era gift wrap ideas "should look at what's around the house.

"Even that 10-year-old dress you never wear can be cut up and the fabric used to wrap a present," Sandler says. "Cut up tired silk plants and use them with bows on packages. Open your eyes to what's around you, not just what you have to buy."

Here are some other green or budget wrapping tips from craft experts:

■ "From the earth back to the earth," says Michael Gaffney, owner of the Milwaukee School of Flower Design. "I take sprigs of fresh pine and pine cones and use them in place of bows or under bows in wrapping."

■ Use craft paper. A few feet of regular wrapping paper can run up a hefty tab. Craft paper costs much less: about $5 for 40 feet.

"People underestimate craft paper. It's budget-savvy and eco-friendly because it's recycled, and your kids can have a blast decorating it for hours. Just unroll it on top of a table," says Rachael Olson, assistant store manager of a Michaels craft store.

■ Use children's school artwork to wrap gifts.

■ Decorate an old towel or pillowcase using fabric paint, suggests Sherri Osborn, of About.com (familycrafts.about.com). "Use colorful safety pins instead of tape to secure the towel in place. If you want to personalize it even more, add a note or a name using embroidery floss."

■ Old calendars, maps and vacation brochures make great recycled wrapping paper, Osborn says.

Other ideas: Tear out colorful magazine pages and wrap gifts in those. Hunt old wallpaper samples at rummage sales or hardware stores. And if you have a humorous gift, use the newspaper comics section.

■ "Cereal boxes can be opened up at the seat, turned inside out and taped back together to create shirt boxes. Oatmeal containers can be wrapped with a band of paper and used in place of gift bags," says Erin Huffstetler, About.com's guide to frugal living (frugalliving.about.com). Coffee cans and berry containers are great for food gifts.

■ Crafters can knit little gift bags from leftover bits of yarn, Huffstetler says.

■ Place a gift in a lightly used or vintage purse that no longer suits your wardrobe, put a bow on the handle, and you have two presents in one.

■ Use an extra coffee mug to hold gifts of specialty teas, coffees or cocoa. Wrap the mug with a ribbon, and attach a personal note on a recycled Christmas card cover.

■ "Use the papers from your home shredder instead of bubble wrap when shipping packages," Olson says.

Most gift wrap gets thrown out, so why spend a lot on it? Anyone searching for recession-era gift wrap ideas should look at what's around the house.

Can't afford solar panels? Lease them

By KATE FORGACH
WWW.FREESHIPPING.ORG/BLOG/

Who wouldn't be interested in saving the earth while saving money on utilities these days? Few of us, however, consider installing solar panel systems because the return on a $20,000 to $50,000 investment is so far down the road. Even after tax rebates, it takes years for that investment to pay off in locally generated electricity.

As a result, the American solar industry has never really taken off...until now. Several years ago, three photovoltaic companies got together and came up with a plan to offer leasing programs so homeowners could begin receiving savings almost immediately.

HOW IT WORKS

Not every home design is suitable for solar panels, so the leasing company first must evaluate your particular home. If they find your home will work, you pay a deposit (frequently $500) and sign a lease for anywhere between one to 25 years. The company files all the necessary permits and designs the system appropriate for you. They then purchase and install the system.

AFTER INSTALLATION

The leasing company continues to own and operate the panels throughout your lease. If you move, the panels can move with you.

You pay a fixed monthly electricity rate throughout the lease. According to SolarCity, a typical home with a 2.8-kilowatt system and a $150/month electric bill would end up with a $60/month bill plus an $80 or $90 monthly lease payment. Others could save much more. Kathly Nalty, who was featured on the CBS Evening News, owns a typical suburban home she shares with kids, a grandmother, five televisions and four computers. Her average electric bill went from $200-$300/month to $59/month. The solar-panel company charges her $100/month for her 15-year lease.

Some utility companies even allow you to sell back excess power generated by your solar panels, when they produce more power than your house requires. This process is known as net-metering.

HOW THEY MAKE MONEY

The leasing companies obviously make money on deposits and monthly fees, but the bulk of their profits come from generous state and federal solar rebates, worth a couple thousand dollars per system. The advantage is that they understand the complex network of rebates required to turn a profit.

PRIMARY RENTAL COMPANIES

Three primary companies presently offer leasing programs:

■ Citizenre (www.citizenre.com) has received the bulk of attention among solar leasing companies as Citizenre REnU was the first available program in the United States.

■ freEner-g(www.freener-g.com) is a Minnesota-based program, initially developed to serve the Minneapolis/St. Paul Area.

■ SolarCity (www.solarcity.com) serves portions of Arizona, California and Oregon.

Discoveries could improve climate projections

New discoveries about the deep ocean's temperature variability and circulation system could help improve projections of future climate conditions.

The deep ocean is affected more by surface warming than previously thought, and this understanding allows for more accurate predictions of factors such as sea level rise and ice volume changes.

High ocean surface temperatures have also been found to result in a more vigorous deep ocean circulation system. This increase results in a faster transport of large quantities of warm water, with possible impacts including reduction of sea ice extent and overall warming of the Arctic.

"The deep ocean is relatively unexplored, and we need a true understanding of its many complex processes," said U.S. Geological Survey Director Marcia McNutt. "An understanding of climate change and its impacts based on sound, objective data is a keystone to the type of long-term strategies and solutions that are being discussed now at the United Nations conference in Copenhagen."

USGS scientists created the first ever 3-D reconstruction of an ocean during a past warm period, focusing on the mid-Pliocene warm period 3.3 to 3 million years ago.

"Our findings are significant because they improve our previous understanding that the deep ocean stayed at relatively constant, cold temperatures and that the deep ocean circulation system would slow down as surface temperatures increased," said USGS scientist Harry Dowsett. "By looking at conditions in the past, we acquire real data that allow us to see the global climate system as it actually functioned."

"The average temperature of the entire ocean during the mid-Pliocene was approximately one degree warmer than current conditions, showing that warming wasn't just at the surface but occurred at all depths" said USGS scientist Marci Robinson. "Temperatures were determined by analyzing marine plankton fossils, which are organisms that inhabited the water's surface, as well as fossils of bottom-dwelling organisms, known as ostracodes."

Global average surface temperatures during the mid-Pliocene were about 3°C (5.5°F) greater than today and within the range projected for the 21st century by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Therefore it may be one of the closest analogs in helping to understand Earth's current and future conditions. USGS research on the mid-Pliocene is also the most comprehensive global reconstruction for any warm period.

The USGS led this research through the Pliocene Research, Interpretation and Synoptic Mapping group. The primary collaborators in PRISM are Columbia University, Brown University, University of Leeds, University of Bristol, the British Geological Survey and the British Antarctic Survey. ***(USGS)***

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Life & Style

'Up in the Air' soars at Globes on recession theme

AP

In this film publicity image released by Paramount, George Clooney portrays Ryan Bingham in a scene from "Up in the Air."

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—"Up in the Air" landed at just the right time, emerging as a potential Academy Awards favorite with themes of job loss and economic calamity that offer a heart-breaking yet hilarious reflection of these hard times.

The film grabbed a leading six Golden Globe nominations Tuesday, including best drama, plus directing and screenplay honors for Jason Reitman. George Clooney earned a best dramatic actor slot as a frequent-flyer junkie traveling the country in first-class seats and premium car rentals as he fires the rank-and-file at downsizing companies.

"We just got a little lucky. Jason's been writing this movie for like six or seven years now and it only really came about right at this moment, and he kind of adapted the screenplay to fit the times," said Anna Kendrick, a supporting-actress nominee as a bright young efficiency expert whose innovations threaten the livelihood of Clooney's character. "I think it's a better movie for that."

Kendrick's competition includes "Up in the Air" co-star Vera Farmiga, who earned a supporting-actress honor as Clooney's frequent-flyer dream woman.

Other drama picks were the space fantasy "Avatar," the Iraq War tale "The Hurt Locker," the World War II saga "Inglourious Basterds" and the Harlem teen story "Precious: Based on the Novel `Push' by Sapphire."

The musical "Nine" ran second with five nominations, including best musical or comedy and acting slots for Daniel Day-Lewis, Penelope Cruz and Marion Cotillard.

Also competing for musical or comedy are the romance "(500) Days of Summer," the bachelor-party bash "The Hangover" and two Meryl Streep films, "It's Complicated" and "Julie & Julia."

Hollywood's second biggest film honors after the Academy Awards, the Globes are a key ceremony that sort out the prospects leading up to the Oscar nominations Feb. 2. The 67th annual Globes will be handed out Jan. 17, six days before voting closes for the Oscar nominations.

There will be room for more films this time at the Oscars, whose best-picture category has been doubled from five to 10 nominees. Oscar organizers hope the expanded field will open best-picture honors up to a broader mix of movies.

Three film contenders had two Globe nominations each: Streep, competing against herself for musical or comedy actress in the Julia Child tale "Julie & Julia" and the romance "It's Complicated"; Sandra Bullock, nominated as dramatic actress in the football story "The Blind Side" and musical or comedy actress for the romance "The Proposal"; and Matt Damon as musical or comedy actor for the whistleblower satire "The Informant!" and supporting actor for the South African rugby drama "Invictus."

Among television categories, nominations for drama series went to HBO's "Big Love," Showtime's "Dexter," Fox's "House," AMC's "Mad Men" and HBO's "True Blood."

Musical or comedy series slots went to NBC's "30 Rock," HBO's "Entourage," Fox's "Glee," ABC's "Modern Family" and NBC's "The Office."

"Up in the Air" has had a glowing reception from critics and awards watchers since it debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, where Reitman also premiered his two earlier features, "Thank You for Smoking" and "Juno."

Audiences have crowded theaters for the film, which so far has been playing in limited release before it expands nationwide Dec. 23.

Though it has plenty of heavy moments, "Up in the Air" generally had been considered a comedy, and distributor Paramount submitted it for the Globes' musical or comedy categories. The movie's serious side clearly resonated with Hollywood Foreign Press Association members who hand out the Globes, since they designated it as a drama.

The notion of what's a comedy or musical and what's a drama often gets fuzzy. Fox Searchlight submitted the country-music tale "Crazy Heart" as a musical because of its wall-to-wall tunes, yet it wound up nabbing Jeff Bridges a nomination for best dramatic actor.

Robert Downey Jr. scored a nomination for musical or comedy actor in the title role of "Sherlock Holmes," which has a lot of humor but is mainly an action thriller.

"Up in the Air" is based on the novel by Walter Kirn, published in 2001, months before the loose and easy air travel the book depicts was changed forever by security clampdowns after the Sept. 11 attacks.

The novel also came years before the recession. Reitman started working on his big-screen adaptation six years ago, giving it a lighter touch for the flush times back then.

As the economy tanked, the film took on a weightier tone. Reitman incorporated today's prevailing employment insecurity and shot segments with real people who had lost their jobs, their painful remarks and recollections woven throughout the narrative.

Reitman's father—"Ghostbusters" director Ivan Reitman, who was a producer on "Up in the Air"—said the film reflects not only the financial crisis, but also the way modern times alienate people from personal interaction.

Clooney's Ryan Bingham revels in his solitary traveling life, a master of the angles to build his flyer account toward a lofty but ultimately meaningless goal of 10 million miles. Yet he's a man who has left his human connections on the ground.

"It seems sort of very apt," Ivan Reitman said. "The way we keep isolating ourselves more behind technology, behind getting trapped in a kind of loneliness that seems unique for our times."

Also finding favor were films with war-on-terror themes, which previously had made little impact with audiences, critics or awards voters.

Along with its best-drama nomination, the Iraq story "The Hurt Locker" earned Kathryn Bigelow a directing slot and Mark Boal a screenplay nomination. "Brothers," combining action at home and in Afghanistan, had a best-actor nomination for Tobey Maguire and a song nomination, while the homefront war tale "The Messenger" picked up a supporting-actor honor for Woody Harrelson.

In "Brothers," Maguire plays a soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after fighting in Afghanistan.

"I did the movie largely to explore this arena and shed a light on a subject that could use some light shed on it," Maguire said. "We're responsible for this, in its entirety, as a society."

Set among a three-man unit that defuses bombs in Iraq, "The Hurt Locker" helps put the abstractions of the war into real terms for viewers, Bigelow said.

"For those of us who have never been to the front lines or perhaps are never going to go, I think it unpacks it a bit," Bigelow said.

For Bigelow, the Globe attention also has a more personal connection: She's competing for best director against ex-husband James Cameron, nominated for "Avatar."

"Very interesting," Bigelow said. "It's very curious."

NUTS & BOLTS

'Inglourious Basterds' tops Globes surprises

By JAKE COYLE
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The Golden Globes nominations didn't include any fall-out-of-your-seat shockers, but they did—as always—feature some surprises and the inevitable snubs.

Though the Globes bestowed six nominations on one of the awards season favorite's, Jason Reitman's "Up in the Air," they also spread the love around—especially to a few favorite stars.

GLORIOUS "INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS"

Quentin Tarantino's re-imagined WWII revenge tale won an unexpected four nominations: best film (drama), best supporting actor for the roundly acclaimed Christophe Waltz and best director and best screenplay for Tarantino. "Basterds" isn't expected to roll to as many Oscar nominations, but it was particularly suited to the Globes. It premiered at Cannes and takes place in Europe, making it more appealing to the Hollywood Foreign Press (which last year bestowed several awards on "In Bruges," another grisly, darkly comic film set in Europe). Though Tarantino has only won one Globe (for directing "Pulp Fiction"), his films have been well-received by the Globes. "Kill Bill Vol. 1," ''Kill Bill Vol. 2" and "Jackie Brown" all earned acting nominations.

JULIA ROBERTS' STAR WATTAGE

From out of left field was the Globes best actress (comedy or musical) nomination of Roberts for her performance in the corporate spy thriller "Duplicity." The Globes have long been known for cowing to A-listers to lure them to their televised award show, and Roberts' win (deserved or not) seems a prime example of that. She's now been nominated seven times, with three wins.

THE ROAD ENDS HERE?

The awards prospects for both "The Road" and "The Lovely Bones" took substantial hits Tuesday. Neither has received great reviews, but Viggo Mortensen ("The Road") was a strong possibility for best actor. "The Lovely Bones," which is planning a wider release for January, at least earned a nomination for Stanley Tucci's supporting performance.

NO REST FOR THE HANGOVER

The runaway hit of the summer, "The Hangover," earned a best picture (comedy or musical) nomination. It's perhaps less surprising considering how popular the movie was. The Globes, apparently warming to broad male comedies, last year gave nominations to "Pineapple Express" and "Tropic Thunder," too.

OH, BROTHER

Tobey Maguire's performance as a soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder in "Brothers" has earned some good reviews, but neither the performance nor the film has had much traction. A cynical awards-watcher might say Maguire was a beneficiary of some glad-handing with the Hollywood Foreign Press. It's the first nomination for Maguire.

THE HURT LOCK

Jeremy Renner wasn't quite a lock for a best actor (drama) nomination, but his absence was unexpected. "The Hurt Locker," in which Renner plays a bomb technician in Iraq, is widely considered an Oscar favorite and has recently been picking up awards from critics groups. His spot in the category, though, likely went to Maguire.

TWO FOR BULLOCK

It's one of the best stories of the year: Nobody in Hollywood is hotter than Sandra Bullock. Though middle-aged women (Bullock is 45) have long had a tough road in the movies, Bullock is not only ruling the box office, she's garnering adoration from critics. She was nominated for best actress in both drama ("The Blind Side") and comedy or musical ("The Proposal").

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE

Clint Eastwood's "Invictus" and the British coming-of-age drama "An Education" are both forecast by insiders to reap Oscar nominations for best picture (which is now a field of 10 nominees). Neither, though, won a best picture (drama) nom from the Globes despite success in other categories: Eastwood, Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon for "Invictus," and Carey Mulligan for "An Education."

Cameron and Weaver on 'Aliens' and 'Avatar'

By HILARY FOX
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LONDON (AP)—What first signaled to a young, eager-to-please James Cameron he'd make movie history with Sigourney Weaver? Her heels.

More than two decades ago, the director was waiting to meet her in a Santa Barbara hotel to pitch his ideas for the film "Aliens"—the sequel to "Alien."

"I knew she was a tall girl," Cameron said. "I was thinking about her shoes. If she's wearing tall heels she's going to be this domineering personality and I'm going to be in for a rough ride. And if she's wearing flats, she's self-conscious about her height."

"She was actually wearing like a middle heel and I thought, 'OK this is going to work fine. She's going to be strong, she's going to be bold, but she's not going to be completely out of control,'" he said.

In 1985, Weaver signed the deal that made her the first million-dollar actress and the movie was released the following year.

Her second space mission as Ellen Ripley—an astronaut who confronts her fears by taking on the hostile aliens she'd encountered in the earlier film, "Alien"—earned her an Academy Award nomination.

Cameron went on to have more success with his "Terminator" sequel and won 11 Oscars for doomed love story "Titanic."

Earlier this month, Cameron and Weaver were discussing their relationship in London, after reuniting for another sci-fi adventure, "Avatar." The 60-year-old actress plays scientist Grace Augustine, who takes on a 10 foot (three meter) alien form in order to explore the planet Pandora.

■ ■ ■ ■

The Associated Press: Before Sigourney gets here, what do you think about the work you achieved together in "Aliens" with the strong female action character?

Cameron: It redefined strength. It wasn't just about physically kicking butt, it was about having the emotional strength. It's not about being strong and being fearless, it's what you do in the face of fear. And that's what that movie was all about.

(Weaver arrives)

AP: We were talking just before you came in about when you first met. He was telling me the story about wondering what shoes you were going to wear and how he was judging you.

Weaver: (Laughs) I had forgotten about that.

Cameron: I knew you were 6-foot-8 or whatever.

Weaver: Almost avatar size.

Cameron: Exactly and so it was with some trepidation that I was meeting you because I wanted the meeting to go well. I really wanted to make the movie, I thought we could do something pretty amazing together. I didn't know if it would be a combative relationship or one where you felt proprietary control of the character. I couldn't have been more pleasantly surprised at how much fun you thought the script was going to be.

Actress Sigourney Weaver poses for a picture in Los Angeles, Friday, Dec. 4, 2009.

AP

Weaver: What astonished me just reading it, before I'd even met you, was that you knew more about Ripley than I did. And I don't know how you were able to channel all that and come up with this amazing scenario of this woman, moved to another time, so isolated and no one would believe her and no one would give her a break and it was such a fantastic beginning to a story about a character.

Cameron: It's interesting both Grace and Ripley are characters that are not believed by the male power structure. And I think that women feel that they're not listened to, that their outlook on a situation or their analysis of a situation is not as credible as a male perspective, whether it's in business or whether it's in a relationship.

AP: Why do you think you're able to understand women and female characters like that?

Cameron: My mother is a good role model, she raised five kids old school. She indulged in and supported my artistic endeavors so that may be part of it. Maybe it's because I was a nerdy kid and wasn't the captain of the football team and if I wanted to have a date ... I'd better start figuring out how women thought. I wasn't going to get by on my looks. And then as a filmmaker, I just naturally went toward the thing that people weren't doing because that was a way to be fresh and different. And I was inspired by your character in "Alien" and other good female characters of which there weren't that many.

Weaver: What I think is so wonderful about the way you write women is that action movies get a bad rap. Action is about character and it's so exciting to see people who don't fall apart under pressure. And you see someone being victimized and you just see them hold it together and come back and because women have this history where we're perhaps more victimized and have a harder time being powerful.

Cameron: It's like a chemistry experiment, I'm going to put some of this in, put some of that in, see if it blows up.

Weaver: Oh goody, it did.

"Avatar" opens in the U.S. on Dec. 18.

DA: Letterman suspect sought to mask blackmail

NEW YORK (AP)—A TV producer accused of trying to blackmail David Letterman for $2 million said he needed money to visit his son and would mask the transaction as a business deal, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Robert J. "Joe" Halderman also told the comedian's lawyer he would keep copies of his information on Letterman's love life for "protection," worrying that he could be fired—or even killed—in retaliation for the scheme, Manhattan prosecutors said in court papers.

"The issue is your client does not want this information public," Halderman told Letterman's attorney in a secretly taped conversation, according to prosecutors. "I have said, for a price, I will sign a confidentiality agreement and I will not make this information public. That's, that's the deal."

A judge is expected to rule next month on Halderman's argument for dismiss the attempted grand larceny case, which prompted Letterman to disclose on-air that he had had affairs with staffers.

Halderman says he was just shopping a thinly veiled screenplay about Letterman's life to the late-night TV icon. The Manhattan District Attorney's office says his conduct and comments make it clear his goal was hush money to keep quiet about Letterman's dalliances.

In sometimes scattered remarks to Letterman's lawyer, Halderman lamented that he couldn't afford to go see a son who lives 2,000 miles away, insisted on rigging up a contract and getting paid by check in case of a tax audit and worried that Letterman might engineer his firing or worse in revenge, according to accounts in prosecutors' filing Tuesday.

"Should I be fired, mysteriously ... if my house burns down ... any number of things that, I don't know this person, I've never met this person, I have no idea who or what he is or is capable of," Halderman said, according to the court papers. He added that someone might decide "the only way to be sure that I never talk to anybody is for somebody to kill me," the papers said. Prosecutors arranged for Letterman's lawyer to record two meetings with Halderman.

Halderman laid out his cover story frankly, saying he would tell his accountant, "I'm optioning a screenplay. I think that's how we should define it," according to the papers.

Still, he expressed misgivings about the scheme, telling Letterman's lawyer he was "not terribly impressed by" his own conduct, according to the papers.

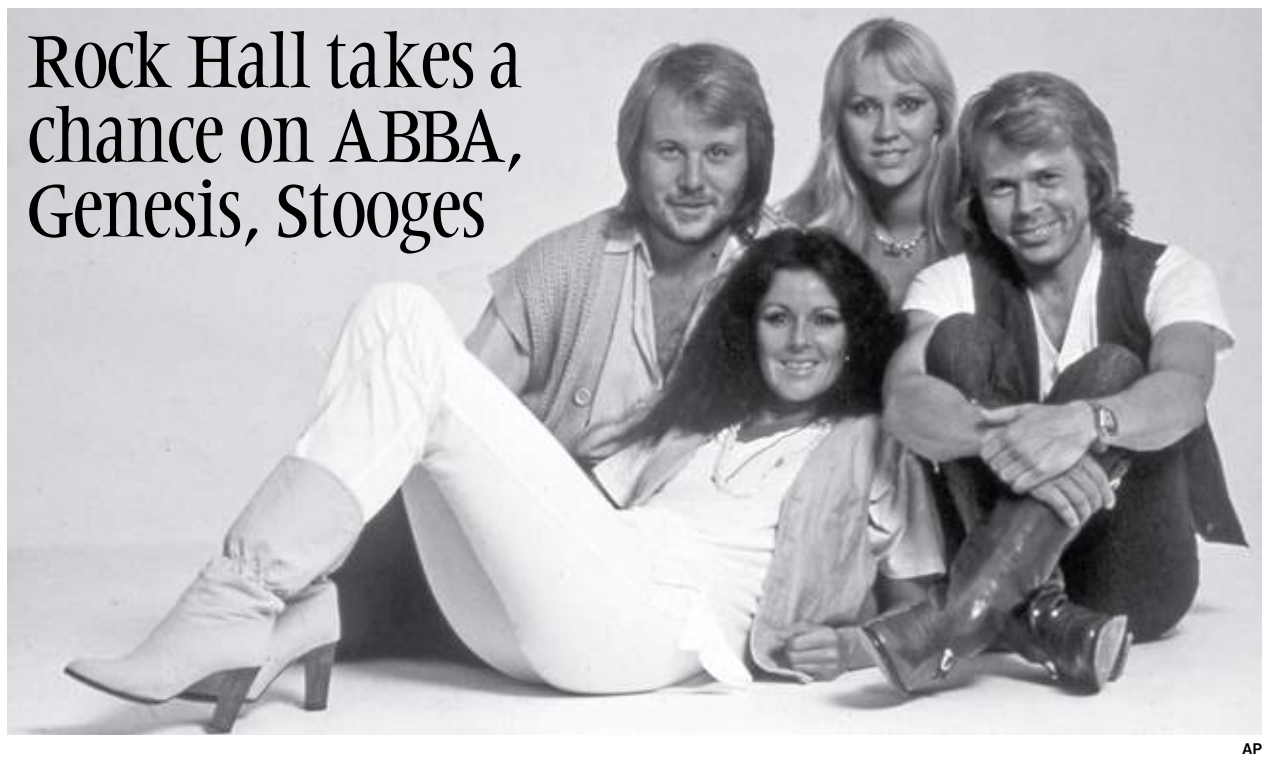
"His efforts to define and characterize his actions as something legitimate and make the 'deal' appear normal are nothing more than a transparent charade," assistant district attorneys Judy Salwen and Peirce R. Moser wrote.

Halderman's lawyer, Gerald Shargel, stood by his contention that the exchange was aboveboard business.

"He had intellectual property relating to Letterman's poor conduct. He had the right to sell that intellectual property," Shargel said Tuesday.

Halderman has said in court papers that he threatened nothing more than a sale to someone else if Letterman said no.

Rock Hall takes a chance on ABBA, Genesis, Stooges



AP

This 1977 file photo shows members of Swedish pop group Abba, from left, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Agnetha (known as Anna) Faltskog, Annifrid (known as Frida) Lyngstad and Benny Anderson.

CLEVELAND (AP)—ABBA is dancing its way into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, along with Genesis, Jimmy Cliff, The Hollies and The Stooges.

The list of the next class of inductees was released Tuesday by the Cleveland hall. ABBA and The Stooges made it in this time after being nominated previously but not making the cut.

ABBA, a Swedish pop group that became one of the most successful acts in pop history, continues to sell millions of records each year and has been finding new fans through the popularity of "Mamma Mia," a stage musical and film incorporating its songs, including "Dancing Queen," ''Money, Money, Money" and "The Winner Takes It All."

ABBA's name is an acronym formed from the first names of band members Agnetha Faltskog, Benny Andersson, Bjorn Ulvaeus and Annifrid Lyngstad. They broke up in 1982 and have resisted reunion offers.

Genesis began in the late 1960s as an art-rock act fronted by Peter Gabriel and evolved after his 1975 departure into a more mainstream act, with drummer Phil Collins taking over as lead singer. Some of the band's more familiar songs include "Follow You, Follow Me," ''Tonight Tonight Tonight" and "Invisible Touch."

Cliff, a Jamaican singer, is credited with introducing reggae music to a broader audience through his album "The Harder They Come" and the movie of the same name, in which he starred in the early 1970s.

Part of the British Invasion, the Hollies had a long string of pop hits in the 1960s characterized by the three-part harmonies of original members Allan Clarke, Graham Nash and Eric Haydock.

Led by the Iggy Pop, The Stooges came sneering out of Michigan, in the late '60s with a primal, growling sound that paved the way for punk, new wave, grunge and other, edgier music genres.

The Rock Hall also announced that its Ahmet Ertegun Award for non-performers would go to music industry executive David Geffen, the songwriting teams of Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil and Ellie Greenwich and Jeff Barry, and individual songwriters Jesse Stone, Mort Shuman and Otis Blackwell.

Ertegun, the founder and chairman of Atlantic Records, died in 2006.

The hall's 25th annual induction ceremony is scheduled for March 15 in New York City.

Buddy cop genre lives again on 'NCIS' spinoff

LOS ANGELES (AP)—If any series has a shot at singlehandedly reviving the buddy cop genre, it's "NCIS: Los Angeles."

A spinoff of the durable "NCIS," the newcomer is a hit that ranks as one of the fall season's top-rated shows. Chris O'Donnell and LL Cool J, who star as slick federal agents, understand that their on-screen chemistry is a big part of the L.A. version's appeal.

Their off-screen charm isn't shabby, either.

When O'Donnell is quizzed about what his co-star's stage name (he was born James Todd Smith) stands for, he doesn't hesitate: "Ladies Love Cool James," O'Donnell shoots back.

"Ah, got ya! My man, Chris," actor-rapper LL Cool J said, smiling.

Ask the pair if their wardrobe on "NCIS: Los Angeles" (9 p.m. EST Tuesday, CBS) will approach the trendsetting fashions of Crockett and Tubbs on the uber buddy cop show of the 1980s, "Miami Vice," and they're off and running.

"You never know. If we go undercover in a club and gotta shake it up a little, and Chris has to put his Flavor Flav clock on, I'm sure he'll do it," LL Cool J said. "They have a clock ready for him."

"When is Flav coming on the show?" O'Donnell said, responding in kind. "Every time his (LL Cool J's) phone rings, I say, `Seriously, man, is that Hammer?' It's so funny, because the names I throw out are from 15 years ago."

Men bonding as they fight crime is a TV staple, but one that was eclipsed in recent years as ensemble series including "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and its spinoffs dominated. On "NCIS," the quietly authoritative Mark Harmon rules his colorful subordinates.

(Other buddy crime shows, like freshman "White Collar," fail to meet the mandatory genre requirement of two men of equal law-enforcement status.)

The "NCIS" spinoff, which features Oscar-winning actress Linda Hunt, needed to go in a different direction from the original, said executive producer Shane Brennan. Until he saw O'Donnell and LL Cool J as undercover special agents G. Callen and Sam Hanna, however, he wasn't sure if the pairing would work—and it did, immediately, he said.

AP

In this TV publicity image released by CBS, Chris O'Donnell portrays Special Agent "G" Callen in a scene from, "NCIS Los Angeles".

LL Cool J offers a theory why.

"I think Chris and I, we complement each other in many ways," he said. "Forget the obvious visual differences; culturally, we're so different, him being from the northern Chicago suburbs, me being from Queens, N.Y.," he said. "It's a cosmopolitan city, Midwestern kind of guy coming together on this show, so we see things so differently because of that."

"The hybrid vision, so to speak, is really cool," he added.

O'Donnell frames the contrast differently.

"Todd is one of the great optimists of our time. I tend to be a little more pessimistic. It's a great combo," he said—and one he hopes will prove memorable.

The genre has produced "great teams along the way," O'Donnell said, and he's hoping his partnership with LL Cool J is counted as one.

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The Princess and the Frog

Friday		4:30	7:20	9:35
Saturday	1:10	4:30	7:20	9:35
Sunday	1:10	4:30	7:20	
Mon thru Thurs		4:30	7:20	

Anika Noni Rose, John Goodman
Comedy, Family • Rated G

Synopsis

After being summoned back to the Mouse House by Pixar founder John Lasseter in 2006, Alladin and Treasure Planet directors Ron Clements and John Musker join forces once again for this traditionally animated 2-D fantasy for the entire family, set in New Orleans. Former Dreamgirl Anika Noni Rose will voice the lead character Tiana, Disney's first African-American heroine in their long heritage of fairy tale animated features. Also in the voice cast is Keith David, lending his baritone chords to the film's villain, Dr. Facilier.

Ang Tanging Pamilya

Friday		4:10	7:30	9:50
Saturday	1:20	4:10	7:30	9:50
Sunday	1:20	4:10	7:30	
Mon thru Thurs		4:10	7:30	

AiAi Delas Alas, Joseph Estrada
Action • Rated NR

Synopsis

A young woman is happily surprised to find her long distance boyfriend in the country, with the intention of proposing to her. She accepts, and is looking forward to a happy life together. But the parents on both sides don't want to make it easy, putting all the wedding plans at risk as they wage war with each other.

★ ★ ★

Ninja Assassin

Friday		7:10	9:40
Saturday		7:10	9:40
Sunday		7:10	
Mon thru Thurs		7:10	

Rain, Rick Yune
Action • Rated R

Old Dogs

Friday		4:25	7:15	9:30
Saturday	1:25	4:25	7:15	9:30
Sunday	1:25	4:25	7:15	
Mon thru Thurs		4:25	7:15	

John Travolta, Robin Williams
Comedy, Family • Rated PG

Twilight Saga: New Moon

Friday		4:00	7:00	9:45
Saturday	1:00	4:00	7:00	9:45
Sunday	1:00	4:00	7:00	
Mon thru Thurs		4:00	7:00	

Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart
Thriller, Romance • Rated PG 13

2012

Friday		4:05	7:05	10:10
Saturday	1:05	4:05	7:05	10:10
Sunday	1:05	4:05	7:05	
Mon thru Thurs		4:05	7:05	

John Cusack, Amanda Peet
Action, Thriller • Rated PG 13

Planet 51

Friday		4:20	
Saturday	1:30	4:20	
Sunday	1:30	4:20	
Mon thru Thurs		4:20	

Gary Oldman, Jessica Biel
Comedy, Adventure • Rated PG 13

The Blind Side

Friday		4:15	7:25	10:00
Saturday	1:15	4:15	7:25	10:00
Sunday	1:15	4:15	7:25	
Mon thru Thurs		4:15	7:25	

Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw
Drama, Biopic • Rated PG 13

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Michael Jackson estate administrators seek payment

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The administrators of Michael Jackson's estate and a cadre of attorneys are seeking millions for managing the King of Pop's affairs after death, court documents filed Tuesday show.

It's unclear how much exactly will be paid out.

The administrators of Jackson's estate, attorney John Branca and music executive John McClain, are seeking five percent of money the estate has earned so far.

The administrators and attorneys have not been paid since Jackson's death on June 25, the filings state.

The estate may have earned $100 million or more with the sale of rights to the concert film "This Is It," new music releases and merchandising agreements.

But Jackson's estate also faces significant debt and a lawsuit cites at least 10 lawsuits that are still pending. They include suits over the rights to "Thriller," Jackson's iconic song and music video directed by John Landis, and lawsuits filed by former associates.

The filings state that a detailed accounting of the estate's earnings is not ready, but attorneys have filed some financial records for the judge to review.

Many experts believe that Jackson's estate earnings could eclipse those of another famous, and profitable, music icon—Elvis Presley.

"Unlike the typical estate, the operation of Michael Jackson's estate is more akin to the operation of a multimillion dollar business enterprise," attorney Jeryll S. Cohen wrote in a filing.

She wrote that many of the attorneys working the case have spent up to 14 hours a day on the case, and that not approving the fees soon will create a financial hardship.

Branca is asking the five percent be paid to his firm. The filing states he is not asking for a personal fee for administration of the estate.

Payments would also go to a variety of firms, including one representing the interests of Jackson's children.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff has scheduled a hearing for Jan. 4 to decide how much can be paid out.

Tiger Inc.'s image crash to make sponsors cautious

Can companies afford the risk of signing multimillion-dollar contracts with celebrity endorsers? The self-destruction of Tiger Inc. has some saying the billion-dollar athlete may be a thing of the past.

Celebrity endorsers can help boost both the sale of products and their maker's image. But Woods' hasty and stunning downfall shows how quickly things can sour when a superstar athlete's life choices are exposed in a negative light by today's real-time tabloid news culture.

Companies "want a safe choice and it seems like there's almost no safe choice out there," said Laura Ries, president of marketing consulting firm Ries & Ries.

Woods and his advisers spent years cultivating a good-guy image to go along with his winning ways, which is how he became sports' first - and perhaps last - $1 billion earner. It's also what has made his fall even more jarring.

Most of Woods' $100 million in annual earnings came not from tournament winnings but from companies like Accenture that wanted to be associated with his persona. These image ads are the types that are least likely to endure. Ultimately that could mean few other sports figures will follow in Tiger Woods' lucrative footsteps.

"There has to be trust and he's just taken a grenade to any kind of traditional agreement that you'd normally have," said John Sweeney, director of sports communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Accenture severed ties with Woods on Sunday, two days after he announced an indefinite leave from golf to work on his marriage after admitting infidelities. It said he was "no longer the right representative" of the company's values.

That's not surprising since the global consulting firm had pinned its entire identity on the golfer and bragged that he embodied Accenture's values of perfection and integrity.

Others evaluating their relationship with Woods include AT&T Inc. and Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer. Procter & Gamble Co.'s Gillette brand said this weekend it was distancing itself from him by not airing ads featuring Woods.

Nike Inc., PepsiCo Inc.'s Gatorade and EA Sports say they are standing by him.

Some companies are likely to use the implosion of Tiger Inc. as a warning that they must closely scrutinize all off-the-field behavior of any sports star they're considering hiring and just how much benefit they're getting.

Even then, they'll likely be wary of ads that bank on a celebrity's image and instead go for that star's endorsement of a product.

"Brands continually will come back to individuals who they believe will help them sell more product," said Rick Burton, former chief marketing officer of the United States Olympic Committee and now a sports marketing professor at Syracuse University. "The capitalism of all this is if Tiger can help somebody sell a brand in the future, they're going to use Tiger."

Lindsay Lohan's father arrested in NY

SOUTHAMPTON, New York (AP)—Authorities on New York's Long Island say Lindsay Lohan's father is accused of violating an order of protection by calling his estranged girlfriend.

Lohan

Suffolk County prosecutors say Michael Lohan was arrested Monday on a misdemeanor charge of criminal contempt. They say the alleged phone call was made on Sunday morning.

In June, a judge said Michael Lohan would avoid prosecution on a misdemeanor charge of aggravated harassment if he stayed out of trouble for a year. Lohan denied that he threatened to kill his girlfriend and himself if she left him.

Lohan's attorney says his client is the victim of fabricated claims. He says the ex-girlfriend called Lohan. Lohan is due back in court on Jan. 8.

The actress reportedly is estranged from her father.

'Dance' finale expects a well-behaved Lambert

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"So You Think You Can Dance" producer Nigel Lythgoe won't predict which dancer will end up the winner on Wednesday's season finale. But he's confident that guest star Adam Lambert is going to be well-behaved.

Lythgoe said he passed the message to Lambert's camp that he doesn't expect any surprises during the live, two-hour episode, airing at 8 p.m. EST on Fox.

Last month, Lambert's racy performance during the American Music Awards on ABC drew the ire of the network, which contended that Lambert went further than he had during rehearsals. He was dropped by ABC from a "Good Morning America" appearance.

Lythgoe said he thinks Lambert may have enjoyed making a splash but will perform as rehearsed for "So You Think You Can Dance." Lambert was last season's "American Idol" runner-up to winner Kris Allen.

AP
American Idol finalist Adam Lambert arrives at the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) America's Democratic Legacy Award Gala honoring Steven Spielberg, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2009, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Other singers on the dance finale include Jennifer Lopez, Mary J. Blige and Leona Lewis, with performances by the Groovaloos dance group and by the show's top 20 contestants.

Randy Quaid, wife no-show in court

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP)—Arrest warrants have been issued for actor Randy Quaid and his wife after they failed to appear for a court hearing, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

The couple didn't show up in a Santa Barbara criminal court Tuesday on a felony charge that they defrauded an innkeeper. The no-show will cost the couple $40,000 in forfeited bail.

It was the most recent in a string of court absences that have resulted in arrest warrants and an aborted attempt to extradite the pair from Randy Quaid's home state of Texas.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Lee Carter said the couple are felony fugitives again and will have to post $40,000 if arrested.

The Quaids' attorney, Robert Sanger, declined comment on the case.

Randy and Evi Quaid were arrested on Sept. 24 in West Texas after being accused of using an invalid credit card to defraud the San Ysidro Ranch in Montecito of more than $10,000.

Sanger has said the couple paid the bill and had hoped to resolve the case.

Randy Quaid is best-known for supporting roles in films such "Independence Day" and "National Lampoon's Vacation." He is the older brother of actor Dennis Quaid.

AP
This Nov. 14, 2007, file photo shows actor Randy Quaid and his wife, Evi, arrive to a premiere in New York.

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Alleged Jennifer Garner stalker in custody

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP)—A man is in custody in California on accusations that he violated a restraining order preventing him from coming within 100 yards of actress Jennifer Garner and her family. Police say Steven Burky was arrested Monday at the nursery school where Violet Affleck, one of Garner's two daughters with husband Ben Affleck, is enrolled. Police say Burky is being held on $150,000 bail at the Santa Monica Jail. Garner was granted a restraining order against Burky in November 2008 after she told the court she believed he posed a threat to her and her family. Garner alleged that Burky had been stalking her since 2002. The former star of the television series "Alias," Garner has also appeared in films such as "Juno" and "The Kingdom."

Ghost of meals past: Dickens' toothpick sold in NY

NEW YORK (AP) — An ivory and gold toothpick once owned by Charles Dickens has sold at a New York City auction for $9,150. It was being offered by heirs to the Barnes & Noble family and was up for sale Tuesday at Bonhams New York. The pre-sale estimate was $3,000 to $5,000. The auction house says the buyer did not want to be identified. The toothpick is engraved with the author's initials and has a retracting mechanism. An authentication letter from sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth says the British writer of "A Christmas Carol" and "Oliver Twist" used the toothpick "when travelling and on his last visit to America."

Illinois man admits stalking ESPN's Erin Andrews

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An Illinois insurance executive has pleaded guilty to stalking and shooting nude videos of ESPN sports network reporter Erin Andrews. Michael David Barrett entered his plea Tuesday during a hearing attended by Andrews and her attorney in a Los Angeles federal courtroom. According to a plea deal filed last week, prosecutors and Barrett agreed to a 27-month prison sentence. But a judge will decide how long he serves and how much restitution he will have pay Andrews. Sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 22. Barrett has admitted renting hotel rooms next to Andrews three times and shooting two videos of her while she was naked. He was accused of posting the videos online and trying to sell them to the Los Angeles-based celebrity gossip site TMZ this year.

Fitness guru Jack LaLanne undergoes surgery in LA

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Fitness pioneer Jack LaLanne is recovering from heart valve surgery at his home in Morro Bay. LaLanne's publicist, Ariel Hankin, said Tuesday that the 95-year-old underwent the procedure at a Los Angeles hospital on Dec. 8. Hankin says that before the surgery LaLanne told his family that dying would wreck his image. The weightlifting guru is doing fine and expected to make a full recovery. He became famous for his physique and for outrageous stunts, such as towing boats while swimming across Long Beach Harbor handcuffed. He became a household name by hosting an exercise show on television from 1951-85.

Rick Springfield memoir coming

NEW YORK (AP)—Rick Springfield is getting real. The rock star and "General Hospital" actor is working on an "extremely candid" memoir, publisher Touchstone Fireside announced Tuesday. "Late, Late at Night," which will tell of Springfield's long battle with depression, is scheduled to come out October 2010. Springfield, 60, is known for the hit song "Jessie's Girl" and for his roles on "General Hospital" and "Californication."

Lil Wayne to be sentenced in February

NEW YORK (AP)—Lil Wayne heads to court in February for sentencing in his New York gun case, just days after his next album comes out. The rap star's sentencing date is Feb. 9, set in a Manhattan state court Tuesday. The Grammy winner said nothing during his brief court appearance. He pleaded guilty in October to attempted criminal possession of a weapon. The charge stemmed from a 2007 traffic stop of his tour bus. His plea deal calls for a year in jail. Cash Money Records co-founder Birdman announced on his Twitter account last week that Lil Wayne's next album, "Rebirth," is due for release Feb. 1.

No bump in audience as Stephanopoulos joins 'GMA'

NEW YORK (AP)—It looks like George Stephanopoulos didn't get a very hearty welcome from viewers as the new co-anchor of ABC's "Good Morning America." Preliminary numbers from Nielsen Co. show that his first day on "Good Morning America" on Monday had questionable impact on the audience size. NBC's "Today" beat "Good Morning America" by 1.3 million viewers, widening its advantage from last week's average margin of 1.1 million viewers. Nielsen says Monday's audience for "Today" was 5.9 million viewers, while "GMA" had 4.6 million viewers. Earlier this month, "Today" marked 14 years of winning each week in the ratings. Stephanopoulos, taking over from Diane Sawyer at the "GMA" anchor desk, is partnered with Robin Roberts.

Elf's helpful hints ease kids' first visit to Santa

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: It's that time of year again when parents take their kids to see Santa. As a professional Santa's helper for many years, may I offer some suggestions?

Let your children approach Santa on their own. Do not force your child to sit on Santa's lap. Santa has been seen in books and on TV, but he is now real, big and loud. That can be scary to a child. If he or she wants to stand at a distance and talk to Santa, that is OK. Sometimes just holding the child and standing next to Santa is all it takes for a child to warm up to the idea of sitting on his lap.

If your little one is upset and you want a picture with Santa, have someone else snap the photo while you stand by your child. Let Santa talk to your children while you hold their hands. Santa (if any good) will pace the visit and stop it if it's taking too long. If children are afraid, do not let Santa grab at them to put them on his lap. That will only make the problem worse.

I hope this helps to make the visit easier.

SANTA'S HELPER IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

DEAR SANTA'S HELPER: Ho-ho-ho! Thank you for being ABBY's helper today. I hope parents will take your sound suggestions to heart when introducing their little ones to the jolly man in the red suit.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a retired waitress who worked for years in a family restaurant. Many elderly people would come in alone, and I could see they were hungry for conversation as well as food, so I'd talk to them as much as possible.

As the restaurant became more crowded, I had less time to chat, so I set up a table for four and asked the seniors if they might like to sit at the "senior table." So many of the customers said yes that it turned into a table for 12!

It would be great if restaurants would set up senior tables so everyone could have a dinner partner if they wanted to visit. It's also a great way to make new friends. Now that I'm a senior myself I notice a lot of us sit alone, watching families enjoy being together.

KATHY IN BREMERTON, WASH.

DEAR KATHY: You're a sweet and compassionate woman. A few years ago I heard about some restaurants here in Los Angeles offering a "community dining" table for singles—but they were intended to help young singles mingle. Your idea of a table for solo seniors is a good one, and I hope restaurateurs agree and give it a try. Food tastes better when it's seasoned with good fellowship.

DEAR ABBY: My ex-wife recently remarried and has decided to keep my last name and hyphenate it with her new husband's. She says she's doing it "for the sake of our children."

I don't buy that for a minute, Abby. She was unfaithful many times during our marriage, and I want her to stop using my name so some dignity and honor can be restored to it.

Do you agree that she should drop my name, or does she have a right to it?

WANTS MY NAME BACK IN MAINE

DEAR WANTS: Although I understand your anger, try to take comfort in the fact that your ex still finds prestige in the association with you. Honor and dignity will be restored to your name by the way you and the children conduct yourselves in the future.

P.S. As long as your ex is not trying to defraud anyone, she has the right to use the name you gave her. Accept it and move on.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $12 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

LOOK HOBBES, NO ONE SAW US FIGHTING, RIGHT? THIS CAN BE OUR LITTLE SECRET. OK? SANTA DOESN'T HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT THIS, RIGHT?
MAYBE HE DOES AND MAYBE HE DOESN'T.
OK, OK, I'LL EVEN APOLOGIZE! I'M SORRY. HOW'S THAT? SEE, IT'S OK TO FIGHT JUST A LITTLE BIT IF YOU SAY YOU'RE SORRY AFTERWARD.
YOU BIT AND KICKED.
I SAID I WAS SORRY! WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?!
YOU COULD LET ME READ ALL YOUR COMIC BOOKS.
OVER MY DEAD BODY!
"DEAR SANTA, KNOW WHAT CALVIN DID TODAY?"
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12-17

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

IS THAT THE JOHNNY MATHIS CHRISTMAS ALBUM?
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JIM DAVIS 12-17
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS
TURN IT UP!
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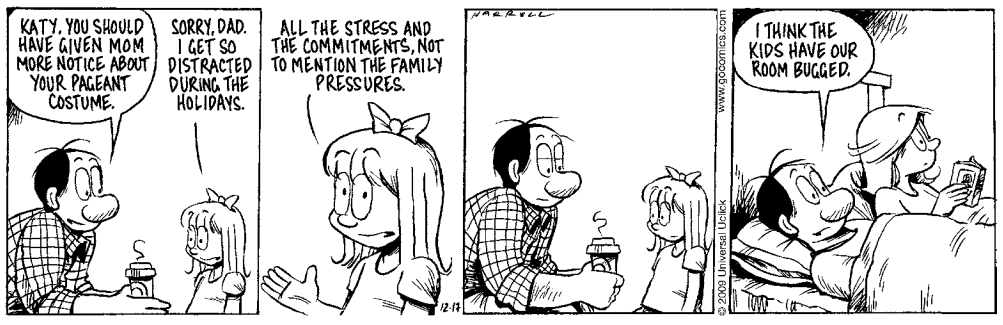
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


KATY, YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN MOM MORE NOTICE ABOUT YOUR PAGEANT COSTUME.
SORRY, DAD. I GET SO DISTRACTED DURING THE HOLIDAYS.
ALL THE STRESS AND THE COMMITMENTS, NOT TO MENTION THE FAMILY PRESSURES.
I THINK THE KIDS HAVE OUR ROOM BUGGED.
www.gocomics.com
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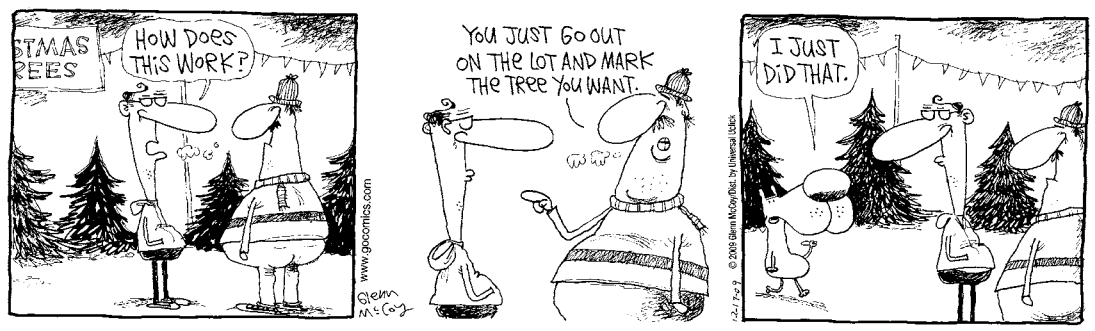
12-17

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


STMAS REES
HOW DOES THIS WORK?
www.gocomics.com
YOU JUST GO OUT ON THE LOT AND MARK THE TREE YOU WANT.
I JUST DID THAT.
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Cold War weapon, for short
5 Rotating part
8 Undermines
12 Garment of India
13 — Khan
14 Hodgepodge
15 Lendl or Pavlov
16 Rocky peak
17 Island guitars
18 Recipient
20 McGwire rival
22 "Going Rogue" memoirist
26 "Spirit of '76" musician
29 Snitch
30 "— not choose to run"
31 Lummox
32 "You've got mail" co.
33 Dandling site
34 Pac. counterpart
35 Mrs. McKinley
36 "He's — nowhere man"
37 Any of three of this puzzle's answers
40 Jab
41 Top
45 Sketch
47 Singer Cole
49 Waikiki wingding
50 Meditative exercises
51 Accomplished
52 "— It Romantic?"
53 Paradise
54 Commotion
55 "Untouchables" role

DOWN
1 Wife of Osiris
2 Grotto
3 Cereal choice
4 Mental attitude
5 Bring the food
6 In bygone times
7 Sheriff
8 March King
9 High-pH
10 Dessert choice
11 "Help!"
19 Listener
21 Make up your mind
23 Bellowing
24 Concept
25 Yule refrain
26 Envelope part
27 Greek vowel
28 Maximal, as a magazine ad
32 Book supplement
33 Russian citadel
35 Tattooist's supply
36 Rock concert need
38 Hawkeye
39 Surpass
42 English river
43 Without
44 Sounds of disapproval
45 Turn blue?
46 Scepter
48 Answer 11-Down

Solution time: 25 mins.

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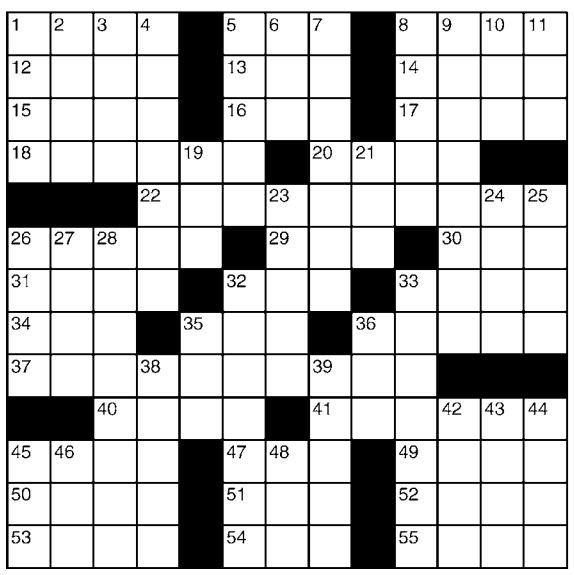
Yesterday's answer 12-17



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Vanessa Zima, 23; Milla Jovovich, 34; Bill Pullman, 56; Eugene Levy, 63

Happy Birthday: Weigh the pros and cons as you make your way through the ups-and-downs you face this year—and you will come out the victor. You cannot base your decisions on what others want. It's what's best for you that will count the most. Stern, calm reactions will work best. Your numbers are 2, 8, 19, 25, 31, 38, 47

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Don't take the blame for something that is out of your jurisdiction. Follow a path that is doable and you will excel. Use your experience to acquire what you want in the future. ✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Spending on something you really cannot afford will lead to stress but, if you use your imagination, you will come up with an alternative that allows you to please someone you love and also save cash. A trip will be the best gift you can offer. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't confuse issues by giving a false impression regarding the way you feel about someone. Get to the point. Honesty and patience will pay off. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Emotions will cause problems, especially if you find it difficult to complete a job someone is waiting for you to finish. Time is on your side and love is likely to find its way back into your heart if you are patient. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You have to save your money. It's never a good thing to spend impulsively or you let someone guilt you into paying for his or her needs. Be strong and budget wisely. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): A look at what's transpired over the past year will give you some good ideas as to how you can make next year better. Formulate your strategy and make sure your goals are feasible. Let the people you care about know how you feel. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): An argument will lead to a devastating turn of events, so don't let a disagreement turn into something ugly. Back off, compromise or do whatever is necessary to keep the peace. Use your insight and creative awareness. ✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): You will have to spend a little time and money in order to set things up for the future. You can obtain the information or skills required to get ahead in the new year. Question everything and everyone before you make your move. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Consider who and what has been a help and who and what has been a hindrance this past year and eliminate whatever is working against you. Change, along with a surprise, is heading your way. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): It may be time to get rid of some of the hangers-on. You have more on the line than you realize and, if you are bogged down with other people's problems, you can't take advantage of the opportunities heading your way. Clear up unfinished business. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Make your own choices but don't do so without thinking matters through carefully. You can do something that you enjoy or you can continue down the same old path that leads nowhere. Set your goals and stick to them and help will be offered. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Mixing your personal and professional life can have its assets but only if you feel secure. Someone you think you can trust will surprise you by taking unexpected action. Don't let anyone limit or burden you. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are intense and ready for whatever comes. You have great vision and the ability to persuade others to help you, but will fight your battles alone if necessary.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	9			1			3	
		5	7		8	4		
		7	2		5	9		
	3						6	
		4	6		3	1		
		8	1		2	7		
	1			9			4	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/17

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

9	3	6	1	5	8	2	7	4
2	1	8	7	4	9	3	5	6
5	7	4	3	6	2	9	8	1
4	8	5	6	2	3	1	9	7
7	6	2	5	9	1	4	3	8
3	9	1	4	8	7	6	2	5
1	4	9	8	3	5	7	6	2
6	5	3	2	7	4	8	1	9
8	2	7	9	1	6	5	4	3

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/16

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

TOGA PARTIES **Solution: 7 letters**

C	A	M	E	R	A	S	G	R	A	P	E	S	C	N
S	U	P	M	A	C	C	U	N	E	N	A	M	O	R
S	T	T	H	E	M	E	H	M	I	M	R	S	N	T
G	H	N	N	T	V	S	W	E	M	P	A	E	T	L
N	E	E	W	E	R	I	I	C	E	E	M	G	E	E
I	N	L	E	O	M	A	L	O	S	S	R	O	S	B
V	T	O	L	T	R	N	D	Y	D	N	E	R	T	D
R	I	O	S	S	S	C	I	I	S	H	R	N	N	S
E	C	H	P	T	(H)	C	H	A	T	I	C	A	E	U
S	W	C	M	(S)	O	O	N	A	T	I	L	M	L	S
D	I	S	(A)	L	S	D	E	U	R	R	O	E	E	I
W	R	(B)	L	T	A	R	A	C	A	P	E	N	G	M
I	E	E	I	L	W	L	L	G	I	G	I	T	A	P
N	G	N	S	G	U	E	S	T	S	U	O	S	N	L
E	G	M	E	S	T	E	F	F	U	B	J	T	T	E

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Authentic, Bash, Beer, Belt, Buffet, Cameras, Campus, Cheese, Circlet, College, Colors, Contest, Crown, Dress, Elegant, Entertainment, Game, Garland, Grapes, Guests, Harpist, Hosting, Juice, Lamps, Live, Ornaments, Ritual, Roman, Sandals, School, Season, Servings, Sheets, Simple, Stomping, Summer, Theme, Toga, Traditional, Trendy, Wild, Wine, Wire, Wreath

Yesterday's Answer: Portable

SALE: The topics of "Wonderword for Kids" appeal to younger fans but the puzzle-difficulty matches what you've come to expect from Wonderword. For a limited time, the book is on sale for just $4 each (U.S. funds only), payable to Universal Uclick. Include $3 postage for the first book order, $1 p&h for each additional book. Send to Wonderword, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo. 64106 or call toll-free, 1-800-642-6480.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports
28 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2009
There's nothing Super about the Pittsburgh Steelers anymore.
25
NMIVA tar for grass to
Two-person volleyb sand to grass today Islands Volleyball As Annual Reverse Co-ec rnament at Navy Hill's t
Angamwas rules 4-person
Tribune
FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2009
XIX, Issue No. 299
Fitial eyes Cepeda's re-appointment to NMC board. PAGE
DPH to ask for extension of emergency declaration. PAGE
$1.35M earmarks for NMI now up for Obama's s
By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER
The fate of the $1.35 million in CNMI special projects funding requested by Del-
egate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) now rests with President Obama, after the conference report on the omnibus Fiscal Year 2010 spending bill cleared the U.S. Senate on Sunday.
Sablan's request for $1.35 million to fund seven programs and projects is contained in the Conference Report on Fiscal Year 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act, a $447-billion spending measure for
several Cabi agencies for On a most Senate app
Fitial: Ombudsman shouldn't accommodate 'overstayers'
10 DAYS to go before Christmas
OPINION METER
This week's poll:
Should NMC revisit its policy of allowing the termination of NMC employees without cause?
Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.
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Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

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• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

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Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

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- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

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Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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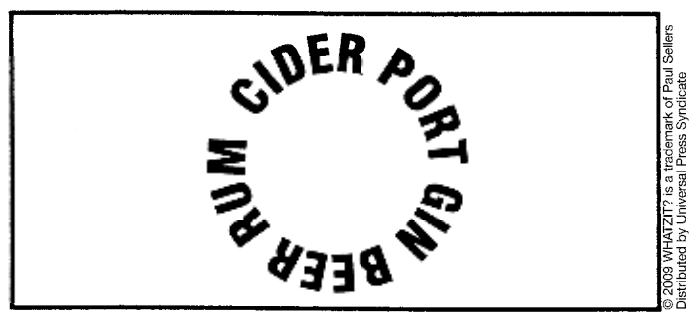
All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



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Find today's solution in this section

Bryant scores 42, Lakers beat Bulls

CHICAGO (AP)—Kobe Bryant scored a season-high 42 points, and the Los Angeles Lakers won for the 12th time in 13 games, beating the fading Chicago Bulls 96-87 on Tuesday.

Down one through three quarters, the Lakers pulled away early in the fourth and sent Chicago to its 11th loss in 13 games.

Bryant was simply phenomenal even though he was wearing a splint on his broken right index finger, tearing through the Bulls after struggling to score 16 in a loss to Utah on Saturday. He needed IV fluids in that game because of a stomach ailment but had no trouble this time.

He was particularly good in the early going, scoring 20 points in the first quarter and 25 in the half against single coverage as Los Angeles built a 54-48 lead, and some fans even chanted "MVP! MVP!" after his dunk in the closing seconds.

Andrew Bynum added 11 points, Pau Gasol grabbed 16 rebounds and Shannon Brown scored seven of his nine in the fourth as Los Angeles came away with the win.

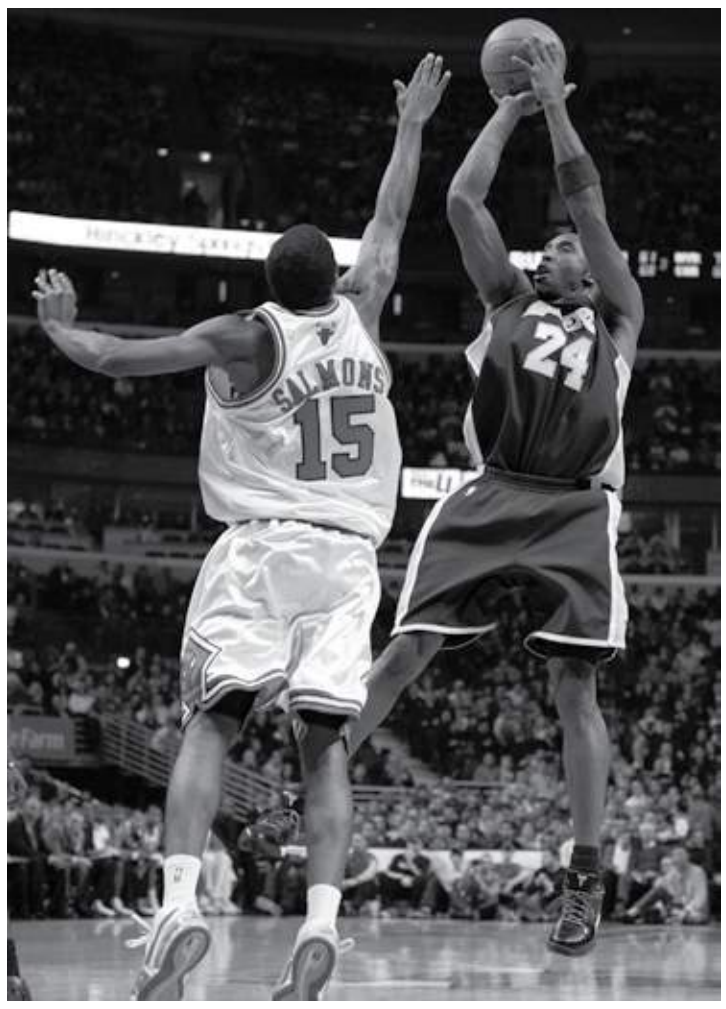
Luol Deng scored 21 for Chicago and so did Derrick Rose even though he strained a left rib in the first quarter. Brad Miller scored 15 and Joakim Noah added 11 points and 20 rebounds for his 11th double-double, but the Bulls came up short against the Western Conference leaders.

They can take some comfort in this, though: They didn't get embarrassed.

That's a big improvement for a team that lost to New Jersey and got blown out by Toronto, Atlanta and Boston during an ugly seven-day stretch, and the Bulls were even leading 73-72 going into the fourth.

Brown, who's from the Chicago area, buried a corner 3 and dunked on a three-on-one to give the Lakers a 77-73 lead a minute into the fourth quarter, and Los Angeles stayed in control the rest of the way.

It was 90-84 after Miller buried a jumper with 2:14 left, but Bryant hit one of his own in the final minute. Gasol converted two free throws, and Bryant then punctuated the win with that dunk, drawing a roar from the crowd.



AP

Chicago Bulls' John Salmons tries to block the shot by the Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009, in Chicago.

Suns 116, Spurs 104

At Phoenix, the Phoenix Suns improved to a perfect 9-0 home record with a win over the San Antonio Spurs.

Amare Stoudemire had 28 points and 14 rebounds and reserve Goran Dragic contributed a career-high 18 points.

The Suns made 11 of 16 3-point attempts, while shooting 52 percent from the field.

Tim Duncan had a season-high 34 points and 14 rebounds for San Antonio.

Rockets 107, Pistons 96

In Houston, Luis Scola and Aaron Brooks scored 23 points apiece as Houston snapped Detroit's five-game winning streak.

The Rockets shot a season-high 54.7 percent (41 of 75) from the field.

Houston's seven-time All-Star Tracy McGrady made his first appearance of the season, coming back from knee surgery. In a cameo, McGrady sank a 3-pointer in the first quarter before sitting out the remaining three quarters.

Richard Hamilton scored 21 for the Pistons.

Trail Blazers 95, Kings 88

In Portland, Oregon, LaMarcus Aldridge hit the go-ahead layup despite a bad ankle as Portland downed Sacramento.

Aldridge finished with 25 points and nine rebounds. He pulled the Blazers to 81-81 midway through the final quarter with an alley-oop layup.

Aldridge's layup put Portland ahead 86-85 with three minutes left, and he hit another layup and added a free throw to give the hosts a four-point cushion with 1:37 left.

Tyreke Evans had 19 points for the Kings, who lost their seventh straight on the road.

Heat 115, Raptors 95

In Miami, the hosts won a home game for the first time in more than three weeks, comfortably beating Toronto.

Michael Beasley tied his career high with 28 points and Dwyane Wade added 19 while sitting out the entire fourth quarter.

Beasley added 11 rebounds for the Heat, who snapped a four-game home slide.

Chris Bosh scored 28 points on 9-of-13 shooting for Toronto, but grabbed only two rebounds in 32 minutes.

Cavaliers 99, Nets 89

In Cleveland, LeBron James had 23 points, six rebounds, seven assists and broke up a fight as Cleveland beat New Jersey.

The Nets' Devin Harris was ejected with 3:48 left in the game after wrapping his arm around Jamario Moon's face and neck and pulling him to the ground while Moon was going up for a breakaway basket.

James wrapped his arms around Harris and tried to pull him away while some of his teammates, including Shaquille O'Neal, began pushing their way toward Harris.

Brook Lopez had 22 points and 15 rebounds for New Jersey.

Bobcats 94, Knicks 87

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Stephen Jackson scored 24 points and keyed the Bobcats' 15-2 run to end the game as Carolina stopped New York's season-high four-game winning streak.

Gerald Wallace had 21 points and Raymond Felton scored 18, including two driving layups in Charlotte's game-closing run to snap a two-game skid.

Chris Duhon had 18 points for the Knicks but struggled to defend Felton late on.

Halladay, Lee deal could be completed Wednesday

NEW YORK (AP)—The blockbuster trade sending Roy Halladay to Philadelphia and Cliff Lee to Seattle could be completed Wednesday, and it's become a four-team swap that involves Toronto shipping a prospect to Oakland.

The Blue Jays would send Halladay and $6 million to the Phillies for three minor leaguers: catcher Travis d'Arnaud, right-hander Kyle Drabek and outfielder Michael Taylor.

Philadelphia would also deal Lee to the Mariners for a trio of prospects: right-hander Phillippe Aumont, outfielder Tyson Gillies and right-hander Juan Ramirez.

Toronto would then trade Taylor to the Athletics for third baseman Brett Wallace, obtained by Oakland last July from St. Louis in the deal for outfielder Matt Holliday.

Halladay would receive a $60 million, three-year contract extension through 2013 with the Phillies, a deal that would include a 2014 option.

Details of the nine players involved in the swap of Cy Young Award winners, first reported by ESPN.com and prospectinsider.com, were confirmed by several baseball officials familiar with the talks who spoke on condition of anonymity because the trade was not yet final. Teams were still reviewing medical records and going through the final details.

New Toronto general manager Alex Anthopoulos moved quickly to deal Halladay, who will make $15.75 million next year and had been eligible for free agency after the season. The deal fell into place at about the same time Boston—which also had been interested—reached a preliminary agreement with free-agent pitcher John Lackey on a five-year contract worth $80 million to $87.5 million. Lackey's deal will be announced Wednesday along with outfielder Mike Cameron's contract in separate news conferences, the Red Sox said late Tuesday night.

"Roy Halladay is one of the better pitchers in baseball," Mets general manager Omar Minaya said. "I wish Alex would have traded him to the American League."

Lee, who had both of the Phillies' World Series wins, also is eligible for free agency after next season, when he will make $9 million. He is not getting an extension as part of the trade.

His agent, Darek Braunecker, said he had just begun discussions on a contract extension with Philadelphia.

"At no point did we make any financial demands or price him out of the market, so to speak," Braunecker said. "We were in the very, very preliminary stages of negotiations."

In a deal that was completed, the Chicago White Sox acquired leadoff man and left fielder Juan Pierre and $10.5 million from the Los Angeles Dodgers for two players to be named.

"They already have a good team in place," Pierre said. "They've been accustomed to winning over the last four or five years. I'm looking forward to getting out there on the field on a regular basis."

The 32-year-old hit .308 with 30 stolen bases, 57 runs and a .365 on-base percentage in 145 games with the Dodgers last year, getting steady playing time when Manny Ramirez was suspended 50 games for violating baseball's drug policy. Once Ramirez returned, Pierre became a reserve again.

Halladay, the 2003 AL Cy Young Award winner, had a 2.78 ERA in 2008 and a 2.79 ERA last season in the American League, and will be expected to allow even fewer runs in the NL, where pitchers bat.

His arrival figures to strengthen the Phillies to the detriment of their NL East rivals, but weaken challenges to the World Series champion Yankees and Red Sox in the AL East.

In the AL West, Lee joins a Seattle rotation that already includes young ace Felix Hernandez. The Mariners added speedy Chone Figgins to their lineup from the division rival Los Angeles Angels and still are seeking power to replace third baseman Adrian Beltre.

"We've had a lot of discussions going on, a lot of balls we've been juggling," general manager Jack Zduriencik said.

Knicks' Bender hopeful he can return to NBA

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—After being sidelined for nearly four years, Jonathan Bender is confident a new training regimen will allow his troublesome knees to handle the pounding of playing basketball again.

The newest member of the New York Knicks was inactive for Tuesday's game against Charlotte. Coach Mike D'Antoni said Bender will probably sit out Thursday's game in Chicago, too. But the 7-footer with the soft shooting touch no longer has constant bone-on-bone pain from a lack of cartilage and thinks now is the good time to make a comeback after not playing since the 2005-06 season.

"I had talked to (Knicks president) Donnie (Walsh) a couple months before and he was like, 'Whenever you're ready,'" Bender said Tuesday. "When I got to that point, that's what I did."

Walsh has been a fan of Bender since he ran the Indiana Pacers and traded for the high-schooler shortly after he was the No. 5 overall pick by the Toronto Raptors in the 1999 NBA draft. He enjoyed his best season in 2001-02, when he averaged career highs of 7.4 points and 3.1 rebounds in 78 games.

But injuries forced Bender to miss 172 games over the next three seasons before chronic pain in both knees sidelined him indefinitely in February 2006.

"You play those kind of mind games with yourself," the 28-year-old said. "You get closer and closer and I was like, 'I need a couple more weeks, maybe a couple months more just to get myself together and make sure I'm right.'"

Bender said he was invited to Knicks training camp, but wasn't ready yet. Instead, he continued a training regimen with Charles Austin, who overcame a serious knee injury to win a gold medal in the high jump at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

"The bone-on-bone sharpness feeling—through rest and intense rehab—it's kind of shaved those sharp points down to more dull points," Bender said. "I can bear to run and I changed everything about my workout habits."

Bender hinted those workouts with Austin helped him rather than going through a rigorous training camp. He said watching ex-Knick Allan Houston struggle in his comeback from a knee injury made him pause.

"I read how he got into that and hit a brick wall," Bender said. "It was super tough being off and then coming through that. So that's one thing that hit me mentally also. Just continue my training for a while and try to go right into the flow."

When Bender said he was confident he could play again, he talked to Walsh, and the Knicks signed him on Sunday. Bender's outside shooting and size on the perimeter could fit in with D'Antoni's offense. But the Knicks coach is taking a cautious approach.

"I don't want to just throw him out there," D'Antoni said. "He's only had a couple of practices in the last two years."

Looking to fill the void left by Tiger

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER

The sudden roar from three holes away was enough to make Rory McIlroy turn his head.

The cheer was for a birdie, no doubt. And it was loud enough so thousands of people had to be watching. McIlroy quickly deduced, along with everyone else behind the third green at Doral, that such a reaction could be for only one player.

"Must have been Ernie," he said with a wink and a grin.

The freckled-face kid from Northern Ireland showed a sharp sense of humor, for he knew that Ernie Els was playing that day with Tiger Woods. Then came another cheer, this more like an aftershock, and McIlroy shook his head and continued walking to the tee.

"Definitely, Ernie," McIlroy said with a broad smile, aware he was fooling no one.

There are cheers for birdies, and there are cheers for Woods, and there is a difference.

Golf is louder when Woods plays, whether in Miami or Melbourne, San Diego or Shanghai. It is likely to be a little more quiet now that he is on an "indefinite leave" to try to save his marriage from a sex scandal that has put golf on the front pages—in December, no less.

No one knows when he will return to the PGA Tour, and that might include Woods.

This is not the first time golf has been missing its star attraction. Woods was gone eight months after winning the 2008 U.S. Open to recover from knee surgery. He missed the two months leading up to that U.S. Open with a lesser knee surgery. And he missed two months in 2006 while coping with the death of his father.

"No one can take the place of Tiger Woods," Stewart Cink said. "The rest of us are going to have to put on a better show."

The uncertainty of his return—not only the timing, but possible fallout from his behavior—leaves golf in more dire need to find someone who can fill the void.

"There's plenty of global superstars on the way up to replace him," said Graeme McDowell, who replaced Woods at his Chevron World Challenge two weeks ago and finished second. "But they're just not quite ready to replace him yet. We need him to hang out for another four or five years."

Even that might not be enough time.

Jack Nicklaus once ran down a list of players most likely to challenge Woods, and once he got beyond the usual suspects, Nicklaus feigned a look over his shoulder and said, "It could be some kid out there who hasn't even started playing yet."

Nicklaus said that 10 years ago. Not much has changed.

The second-biggest draw in golf might be Phil Mickelson, the chief foil for Woods through the years.

Mickelson already is wildly popular, not only for his willingness to take on risks inside the ropes, but for spending hours signing autographs. The public embraced him even more upon learning his wife, Amy, had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

In the months before Woods became engulfed in the scandal, the buzz about 2010 was the prospect of Woods and Mickelson colliding at the top of their games.

"Given the finish he had to the year, if Phil comes out strong, then he's the replacement," said Roger Maltbie, a former PGA Tour winner and now an analyst for NBC Sports.

The search is for someone younger, however, and golf rarely has had this many fresh faces.

McIlroy became only the second player—Sergio Garcia was the other—to crack the top 10 in the world ranking before turning 21. With his mop of brown hair, playful swagger and raw skill, McIlroy backed up the early hype when he won in Dubai, tied for third in the PGA Championship and nearly won the European Tour money title.

AP

Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy tees off at the 15th during the first round of the Nedbank Golf Challenge at Gary Player Country Club in Sun City, South Africa, Thursday Dec. 3, 2009.

"If he starts off well, the focus is going to be about Rory again," said his manager, Chubby Chandler. "I didn't realize this at the time, but one reason for the tremendous hype about Rory was that Tiger wasn't around that much."

The same could be said of 24-year-old Anthony Kim, another amazing talent who first came to prominence when Woods wasn't playing. He won last year at Quail Hollow and Congressional, and had a starring role at the Ryder Cup.

Kim appeals to the hip-hop generation as a street-smart kid who grew up in Los Angeles and loves to talk smack. On the practice range one evening at Congressional, Kim had his iPod blaring as he hit balls with his small entourage.

"Yo, get you some of that," Kim said to one of his friends after one drive.

But as another year starts without Woods, Kim is among the promising young stars who are coming off disappointing seasons. He failed to win last year, along with Camilo Villegas and Sergio Garcia.

Some attention is shifting to Rickie Fowler, who lost in a PGA Tour playoff and made it through Q-school before his 21st birthday. Then again, golf is loaded with young players who have a great week, even a great month. What set Woods apart, among other things, is that he had a great 13 years.

It's possible the next great player can emerge from this collection of youth, a group that includes Ryo Ishikawa of Japan, who at 19 became the youngest to win the Japan Golf Tour money title; Dustin Johnson, already a two-time winner who is tall, athletic and hits it a mile; or even Adam Scott, who just turned 30 and has been linked this year to Kate Hudson and Ana Ivanovic.

"I can't imagine anyone having all the tools Tiger has, making huge putts when he needs them over and over and over again," Maltbie said. "The things he does are amazing. We just haven't see that from the kids yet."

Holmgren visits Browns for second straight day

CLEVELAND (AP)—Mike Holmgren remained unemployed. Eric Mangini stayed on the job, and the Cleveland Browns were still a mess.

That was about the extent of things following a drawn-out Tuesday with scarce information as the Browns, searching for a leader to head their football operations, continued talks with Holmgren, the former Seattle and Green Bay coach who wants back into the NFL.

Holmgren, with one Super Bowl title and success brimming from his resume, spent his second day meeting with owner Randy Lerner at the team's suburban headquarters. Despite the lengthy stay, there was no indication that a deal was imminent.

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, Lerner suggested the sides still were talking but gave no specifics.

Holmgren arrived Monday after being invited to Cleveland by Lerner, who wants to hire a proven executive. On Tuesday, Holmgren was back at the team's facility along with agent Bob LaMonte. The length of Holmgren's visit, and LaMonte's inclusion, points to the 61-year-old's strong interest in taking on the Browns, who have had just two winning seasons since 1999.

Mangini, whose future could hinge on whom the Browns hire, told WTAM that he met with Holmgren.

"I have a ton of respect for Mike, and we'll see where it goes," Mangini told the club's flagship radio station. "They are still in the early stages."

Lerner has been focused on finding someone to fix his failing franchise. Last month, he said he wanted to hire a "serious, credible leader" to run the Browns.

Holmgren fits that bill.

He appeared in 12 postseasons and three Super Bowls before stepping down after last season with more wins than any other active coach. Holmgren, who had a spotty four-year run as both Seattle's coach and general manager, is a proven football authority.

He took a sabbatical after the 2008 season to spend more time with his family. But Holmgren has been itching to get back into pro football, and the Browns would be a new challenge. It's not known if Holmgren wants to serve as GM or as an overseer similar to Bill Parcells' role in Miami.

Holmgren recently told a Seattle radio station he found Cleveland's front-office job appealing.

"There's something in my personality, too, that taking on those types of projects, that kind of gets me going. But there's a lot of work to do," he said. "The important thing, going into any organization is that all of the principles, all of the decision makers are pointed in the same direction, with the same motives, the same desires, and then you have a chance."

Even if they reach an agreement with Holmgren, it's possible the Browns may have to conduct further interviews to comply with the league's "Rooney Rule," which mandates that a team must interview at least one minority candidate before filling a front-office vacancy.

Holmgren spent 10 years with Seattle and seven with the Packers, leading them to a Super Bowl title in 1996. The Seahawks made the playoffs six times under Holmgren, including their only Super Bowl appearance when they lost to Pittsburgh to end the 2005 season.

Holmgren said last week he "absolutely" wanted to talk to Seahawks owner Paul Allen and chief executive Tod Leiweke about returning to the team, which relieved Holmgren of his GM duties after the 2002 season. Seattle is looking for a GM following Tim Ruskell's resignation on Dec. 3, and Holmgren could be using the Browns as leverage to get a deal with his former team.

As of Tuesday, the Seahawks were still in the process of what Leiweke last week called "a thorough audit" of the slumping team. They have not started the process of interviewing candidates.

It's not known what impact the hiring of a football "czar" would have on Mangini's status. His first season in Cleveland has been defined by lopsided losses, a suspect draft, players grumbling about practice methods and fines, and the firing of GM George Kokinis.

Mangini has said he would be open to Lerner bringing in someone to head the team's personnel decisions. Following the Browns' upset of Pittsburgh last week, Mangini said he would welcome a chance to show a "czar" what progress he has made in Cleveland.

"They can sit down and talk to the coaches, sit in on any meeting, watch our practices," he said. "Come to our meetings. See how we teach. See how we function as a staff because it's good and it's right. Come take a look because it's a good product."

Lerner recently began a front-office overhaul by hiring Fred Nance as the team's general counsel. Nance was one of five finalists to succeed former NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue.

17 teams interested in Christmas v'ball

A total of 17 teams have signified their interest in taking part in the Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament set from Dec. 18 to 20 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Island Volleyball Club president Jonas Barcinas said so far the men's division have attracted nine teams while the women's side has eight teams.

The tentative men's grouping will have Tinian Amigos, Hopwood Hilitais, Brandon's Boys, Nathan's Boys, Saipan Southern High School, Kagman High School, Islanders, Naw-Mean, and No Fear.

Peligro, Platinum Slammers, MHS Dolphins, Pikkan Ga'ga', Saipan International School, Tinian Amigas, Saipan Floaters, and Hopwood Hilitais, meanwhile, all have hopes of competing in the women's category.

Barcinas said volleyball action starts this Friday and will be from 6pm to 9pm. It will resume the next day on Saturday from 9am to 3pm and conclude on Sunday with games set from 9am to 5pm.

"Men's and women's teams from Tinian and Saipan will be participating and at this time we have about nine men's and eight women's teams. We will determine and finalize the number of teams this Friday. There will be ground rules and all players must abide by it. The officers and members of IVC are excited and ready to make this tournament a reality for all volleyball lovers," said Barcinas.

Barcinas

He added that the tournament will hand awards to the Top 4 teams in each category, tourney MVP, sponsorship awards, as well as medals for the members of the championship teams in the men's and women's divisions.

Barcinas said all-star players will also be chosen by coaches of the men's and women's divisions.

The Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament is sponsored by SEDAC, Jim Gebart, Freddy Salavaria, and Hard Rock Café Saipan.

For more information, contact Barcinas at 483-9219 or Mayumi Aguon at 483-1960. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Masters caging meeting today

The newly formed Masters Basketball Federation of the Northern Mariana Islands will have another organizational meeting today, Dec. 17, 5:30pm at the conference room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The meeting, which will start 5:30pm, hopes to attract those interested in setting up basketball program for players 35 years old and above.

Newly elected president Ray Lizama earlier said it his intent to have the CNMI send a team to the basketball competition of the annual World Masters Games held every four years.

Sydney, Australia hosted the most recent World Masters Games. The Land Down Under also played host to the Games in Brisbane in 1994 and Melbourne in 2002.

Open to people of all abilities and most ages, the World Masters Games are the world's largest multi-sport event, attracting twice as many competitors than the Olympic Games.

According to its website, a significant, fundamental difference between the World Masters Games and the Olympic Games is that World Masters Games are open to people of all abilities rather than just elite athletes, with the emphasis on participation.

To compete in the World Masters Games, people only need to satisfy their sport's minimum age, which ranges from 25 to 35, depending on the sport. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

A GIANT

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and have other endeavors that I want to pursue, namely photography and writing a book," said the Colorado Springs native, who arrived on Saipan in late '60s and had made significant contributions—athletics in particular and CNMI sports in general.

Long list of accomplishments

Long before NMA was founded about 20 years ago, it was Barnes who first ran a track meet for elementary schools.

"I first became involved in track and field in 1967 as a Peace Corps Volunteer here on Saipan. I developed and successfully ran the first Junior Olympics in 1968, which was a track meet between all the elementary schools on Saipan. These schools were San Roque/Tanapag, Garapan, Oleai, Chalan Kanoa, San Antonio, and Mt. Carmel. A small track was built on the playground at C.K. Elementary School (now William S. Reyes Elementary School). I think it was about 167 yards in an oval shape. The Junior Olympics was held in 1968 and 1969. Some of the great athletes of the past who got their athletics beginning during these track meets are Tony Satur, Regino Celis, Diane T. Camacho, Jess Pinalua, Angel Falig, etc.," Barnes said.

Since then Barnes has become a familiar figure in CNMI athletics, helping the Commonwealth reap award and host big events.

"After winning only three medals during the 1990 Micronesian Games on Saipan, we took home 34 medals in the 2004 Micro Games in Guam," said Barnes, who listed this accomplishment as among his personal Top 3.

"Second was the successful hosting of the 2005 Micronesian Area Championships, the 2006 Micronesian Games track and field competition and the 2008 Oceania Open and U-18 Track and Field championships. Just to be part of these major events was rewarding and exhilarating," he added.

"Third best accomplishment was being able to work with a fantastic group of board members over the past 19 years. These include one of the charter members of NMA, Louie Wabol. Also on this great group of people are Elias Rangamar, Robin Eugenio, Kim Prinze, Bobby Winkfield, Kae and Allen Moses, Mary Rangamar, and Ronald Olopai."

More milestones and memories

The 68-year-old former athlete, official, and coach was also involved in the promotion of sports in the whole Micronesia.

"Working with David M. Sablan, Felix Rabauliman, and Al Snyder in planning and hosting the very first Micronesian Games was a milestone for Micronesia back in 1969. It took many more people to pull the Games off than the three I mentioned, but being a part of the Games in bringing all six districts/island groups together for the first time ever, was truly a momentous occasion," Barnes said.

"Seeing Truk/Chuuk in their bright pink uniforms, the great baseball game between Truk and Palau, the domination of Palau's Eliasar Sabalt in track and field, and Katsutse Skang's incredible performance in the Micronesian All-Around will never be forgotten. I also coached the Northern Mariana Islands women's volleyball team which won the first gold medal ever in CNMI sports history," the Doctoral in Education Leadership graduate of University of San Diego added.

Six years later, Barnes became the athletic director for Micronesia's first entrance into an international competition.

"In 1975, Micronesia entered the 5th South Pacific Games, held on Guam, as one team. Getting athletes and coaches from all six major island groups was a super accomplishment in itself. Some of the great performances were Adrian Jack, running a 2:15 in 800 meters which was better than the SPG women's record of 2:19 at the time. Saipan's Gus Aguon winning a silver medal in weightlifting, the Micronesia men winning a silver medal in men's fast pitch softball, the Saures brothers in volleyball in which Ben, the setter, was asked to move to Tahiti to play for their national team as he was easily the best setter in the SPG. The stars of the men's fast-pitch softball team were Tony Satur, who was unhittable as a pitcher in 1975 and Tony Towai, of Palau, who was one of the best hitters in softball as well as baseball at that time," Barnes said.

Love for basketball, volleyball, softball

Before athletics, Barnes developed a love for basketball and volleyball when he first arrived on Saipan.

"I arrived on Saipan in 1967 and began playing basketball and volleyball with the Breakers. I coached some of the great athletes in the late sixties such as Ric Duenas, Tino Olopai, Joe Guerrero, Ray Kapileo, and John Duenas. I think we had a 60-game volleyball winning streak when I left Saipan in 1969, after the Micronesian Games," he said.

"I also coached the Oleai women's fast pitch softball team and we won the league and playoff Championships. Some of these young ladies could have played professional softball in the United States if the opportunity had presented itself. They were that good," Barnes added.

Proudest moment

Barnes' long-list of achievement earned him an induction to the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.

"My proudest moment was being inducted into the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame. My tireless effort and long hours of coaching, administrating, and being involved in sports, actually from the inception of sports in general on Saipan was rewarded by the induction. Most of my involvement in CNMI sports was done in 1960s and 1970s when there were no real facilities and very few trained officials, umpires, and coaches," he said.

"It has been neat watching the progression of sports here on Saipan. Yes, there was a beginning, but it took many, many dedicated people along the way and over the many years to get CNMI sports where they are today. There certainly are more trails to blaze and roads to travel in order for the CNMI athletes to run faster, jump higher, and throw further," Barnes added.

ROSARIO

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Rosario, who won the September Ace, was a bit tentative to join the Ace of the Aces, but club members egged him to play, saying his son will be there to guide him all the way.

"We knew he has this angel and when we saw him play and later found out he won, we had these goose bumps," Joe I. Sablan said.

Rosario dedicated his victory to his son and admitted the pain from losing a loved one still lingers, but support from his family, SGA members/officials, and the community is helping him move on.

"Without these people, I don't know how I and my wife will move on with our lives. In these trying times, the community, my SGA family, and my own family were there to share with us our pain," Rosario said.

"Thank you to all of you and to my son, we miss you and this (trophy) is for you," Rosario added.

ROTARY

From Page 28

supposed to last for only three months, but miscommunication on game schedules extended the league's calendar.

This problem and others are expected to be discussed in today's mandatory meeting at 5pm at the conference room of the Ada gym.

Christmas caging set

Once the Rotary league is completed, the Ada gym will host another basketball tournament with the staging of the 2009 Holiday Hoops.

The Christmas caging is open to both boys and girls in the 11-and-under, 14-and-under, and 18-and-under under age groups. Games will also be played at Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The tournament will run from Dec. 28 to 31 and on Jan. 2 with each team needs to pay the entrance fee of $30. Squads are allowed to have a maximum of 12 players. The organizing Division of Sports and Recreation will provide uniforms (shirts only) on a first come-first serve basis.

Entry fees, rosters, and waiver forms should be submitted on or before Dec. 22 at the office of the Division of Sports and Recreation at the Ada gym.

For more information, contact Ponce Rasa at 664-2502.

SNEAK

From Page 28

tion on the octagon cage is the bout between Saipan's Fasi "Quikdraw" Jesse and Guam's Alex Castro.

Jesse will be putting his clean 6-0 record against the dangerous Castro, who holds a 5-7 record.

The second main event will pit Saipan's Jason "The Rush" Tarkong and Guam's Gil "The Guamaniac" Melo. Completing the triple-treat is the collision of Japan's Tetsuji Kato and Russia's Ilya Zelik.

Two more Russian fighters will be debuting in Trench Wars 11: Redemption with Iliev Ismail taking on Guam's Ryan "Biggs" Bigler and Bashir Jamlihanov challenging Mike "Ogre" Davis, also of Guam.

Other must-see fights in tomorrow's Redemption are as follows: Jeff "Thunder" Cloud vs. Rob "Pitbull" Palacios; "Big" Ron Chisato vs. Lionel Borja; Rob "The Beast" Washington vs. Saipan's Jerome Norita; Josh Alvarez vs. Derick "El Peligro" Rangamar; Jon "The Heat" Delos Reyes vs Maitai "The Charger" Charley; and Wenyu "One Time" Bamba vs. Giovanni "Palaxi" Sablan.

Trench Tech president and promoter Cuki Alvarez vowed an exciting and action-packed night in tomorrow's Redemption as it will be the second time that it will highlight Guam vs. Saipan bouts.

"The last time we had this kind of event, Guam won five and Saipan also got five victories. So, who will be the real winner this time?" Alvarez said.

Tickets for Redemption are still available and are being sold at Boarderline, 670 Rock Steady Shop, Han Nam Market, Mobil Kagman, and Trench Tech Gym. Ticket prices are $25 for general admission and $35 for VIP.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	20	4	.833	–
Toronto	11	16	.407	10 1/2
New York	8	16	.333	12
Philadelphia	6	18	.250	14
New Jersey	2	23	.080	18 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	18	6	.750	–
Atlanta	17	6	.739	1/2
Miami	12	11	.522	5 1/2
Charlotte	10	13	.435	7 1/2
Washington	7	15	.318	10

Central Division

Cleveland	18	7	.720	–
Milwaukee	11	11	.500	5 1/2
Detroit	11	13	.458	6 1/2
Indiana	8	14	.364	8 1/2
Chicago	8	15	.348	9

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	18	7	.720	–
Houston	14	10	.583	3 1/2
San Antonio	12	10	.545	4 1/2
New Orleans	10	13	.435	7
Memphis	10	14	.417	7 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	18	7	.720	–
Utah	14	10	.583	3 1/2
Portland	15	11	.577	3 1/2
Oklahoma City	12	11	.522	5
Minnesota	4	21	.160	14

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	19	4	.826	–
Phoenix	17	8	.680	3
L.A. Clippers	10	13	.435	9
Sacramento	10	13	.435	9
Golden State	7	17	.292	12 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Charlotte 94, New York 87
Cleveland 99, New Jersey 89
Miami 115, Toronto 95
L.A. Lakers 96, Chicago 87
Houston 107, Detroit 96
Phoenix 116, San Antonio 104
Portland 95, Sacramento 88

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESSS

2009 Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Katipuneros and Star Aces players touch racquets before starting their game.

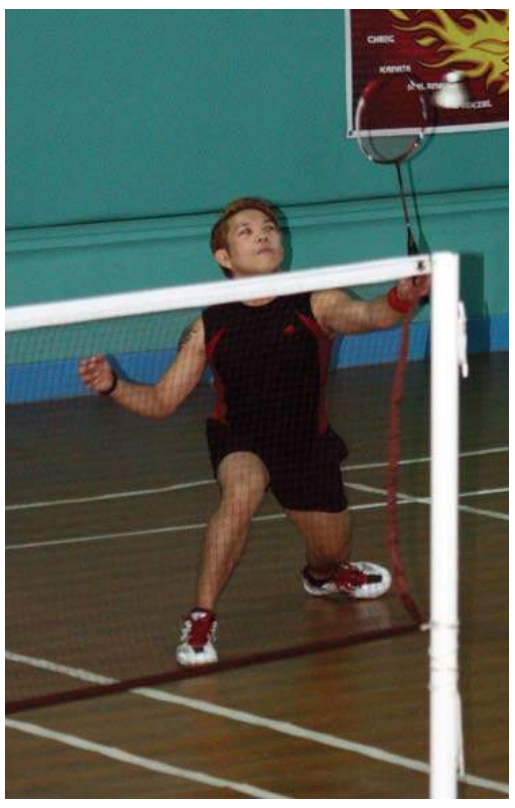
Air Benders' Manatsu Omori returns to the net during their game against the Sizzlers.

Katipuneros' Jerry Hibi jumps off a smash against Star Aces.

Air Benders' Noli Santos makes a backhand return near the net during their game against the Sizzlers.

The Sizzlers' Gary Bandoja goes for a backhand return against Air Benders.

TNT Bombers' Roger Vales makes a return during their game against Magnum Smashers in the 2009 Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament at the REM Centre.



Star Aces' Hapi Gabriel bends for a return.

The Sizzlers' Daniel Macario goes for a smash against Air Benders.

TNT Bombers' Joey Algenio chases the ball.

Magnum Smashers' Chris Hilario returns to TNT Bombers.

17 teams interested in Christmas v'ball

A total of 17 teams have signified their interest in taking part in the Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament set from Dec. 18 to 20 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

26

Bryant scores 42, Lakers beat Bulls

Kobe Bryant scored a season-high 42 points, and the Los Angeles Lakers won for the 12th time in 13 games, beating the fading Chicago Bulls 96-87 on Tuesday.

24

Rosario is Ace of Aces champ

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Triumph in trying times.

That's how to best describe Vince Deleon Guerrero Rosario's victory in the Saipan Golfers Association Ace of the Aces Tournament late last month.

Rosario topped the club championship against 11 other monthly Ace winners and several SGA members after carding the lowest net score of 139 in the two-day tournament held at Kingfisher Golf Links on Nov. 28 and Coral Ocean Point on Nov. 29.

The 36-year-old Rosario showed up for first round of the tournament a day after he buried his son, Vince Larry Rosario II.

The younger Rosario was among the four persons shot dead during a shooting rampage in Kannat Table last month.

"Before I went to the golf course, I visited my son's grave early morning, as every time I play golf, I always remember him," Rosario said.

The newly crowned champion said every time he practices his swings at home, his 5-year-old son would watch him and imitate his moves.

"He was really interested in looking how I do my swing. I bet he could have played golf too if not for that fateful incident," Rosario added.

For topping the SGA Ace of the Aces, a perpetual glass trophy was awarded to an emotional Rosario during the club's annual Christmas party at Charley's Cabaret at the Pacific Islands Club on Tuesday.

Rosario was speechless, trying to hold back tears when party emcee Frances Sablan awarded him the trophy and delivered the club's message of support.

"We knew these are trying times for you and your family, but we would like to congratulate you for showing sportsmanship, for showing your love for golf by playing in the Ace of the Aces and for joining us here. We're sure your son is really proud of you," Sablan said.

SGA treasurer Joe I. Sablan in an earlier interview said

See ROSARIO on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Vince Deleon Guerrero Rosario hoists the perpetual SGA Ace of the Aces trophy during the awards ceremony at Charley's Cabaret at the Pacific Islands Club on Tuesday.

Sneak peak at Trench Wars 11

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Trench Tech's Tetsuji Kato, seen here striking a fighting stance, will face Russia's Ilya Zelik in tomorrow's Trench Wars 11: Redemption at the Royal Taga Hall of Saipan World Resort.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Trench Tech, Inc. will offer a sneak peak of the combatants in Trench Wars 11: Redemption when it holds the official weigh-in today at Saipan Grand Hotel's Club V.

The weigh-in, which will feature fighters from triple-treat main events, will run from 5pm to 7pm with organizers briefing fighters of bout rules and regulations and other details of Redemption. Trench Wars 11 will unfold tomorrow at the Royal Taga Hall of Saipan World Resort.

Leading the three main events of Friday's ac-

See SNEAK on Page 26

A giant in sports steps down

Name: Dr. Kurt C. Barnes
Birth Place: Colorado Springs, Colorado
Birth Date: February 12, 1941
School: San Francisco State University:
BA 1966 and MA 1979, both in Physical Education.
Highest Educational Attainment: Doctoral in Education Leadership from University of San Diego.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

Northern Marianas Athletics president Kurt Barnes is calling it quits after 35 long and fruitful years of involvement in athletics and other sporting events not only in the CNMI, but all throughout Micronesia.

Barnes said it is time to move on and give younger individuals the opportunity to become sports administrators.

"NMA has only just begun to scratch the surface of the talent on Saipan. It takes dedicated board members, coaches, officials, and athletes to stay on top. I am sure that NMA can continue to be the very best sports organization on Saipan," Barnes said.

"I have been volunteering as a coach, athlete, official, and administrator for over 35 years, mostly on Saipan. I have run out of gas

See A GIANT on Page 26

Rotary playoffs tomorrow, meeting today

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The long-delayed 2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League will finally start its playoff round tomorrow at Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The single-elimination playoffs will feature only eight teams and all qualifiers will play in tomorrow's matches.

In the first game at 5:30pm, pennant champion G-Stars will take on Ol'Aces; the second seed San Antonio Sixers will collide against the seventh pick Saipan Fresh Market Rebels at 6:30pm; No. 3 Sonics will duel No. 6 Chalan Kanoa Saints at 7:30pm; and No. 4 Kagman Sparks will challenge No. 5 670 Rollers at 8:30pm. Young 670 Rollers, Rollers I, Celtics, and Hi-Five failed to make the cut.

The semifinal matches are scheduled for Dec. 21, while the one-game only championship tiff is set for Dec. 23.

The 18-and-under caging has been going on for about five months. It was

See ROTARY on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The Saints' Zack Tudela, left, drives against the Sixers' Novo Pepito during their regular season game in the Rotary caging, which will start its playoffs tomorrow.